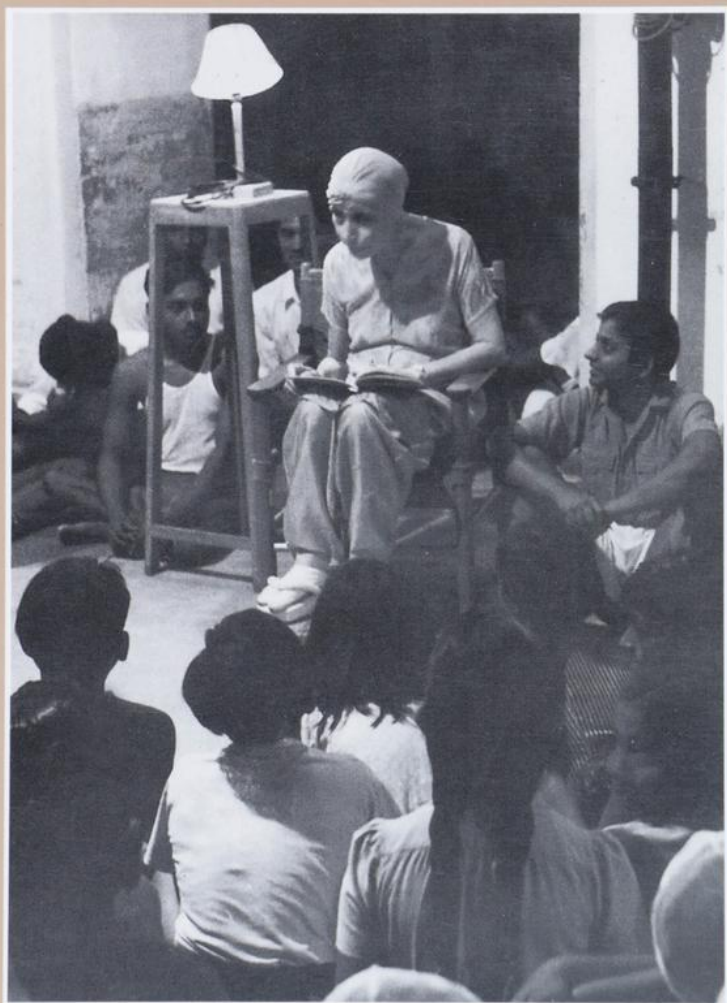


STORIES

TOLD BY THE MOTHER

II



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**SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
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Compiler's Note

These stories are not just stories; they are revelations of living truths conveyed to us by the Mother. Apart from one or two, the stories have been culled from her “Questions and Answers”, the English translation of her “Entretiens” in French.

These anecdotes were first published in French in 1994 under the title “La Mère Raconte”. Now, at the beginning of a new millennium, we are happy to publish an English version of them. If they bring the reader closer to the Mother, their purpose will be well served.

With love and gratitude for all she has given us — and is still giving — we offer this work at her feet.

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Mother at the age of seven

Two Paths of Yoga

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyâ*; (discipline), and the other of surrender.

The path of *tapasyâ* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy.

The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure. It is here, however, that the Western people find their difficulty. They have been taught to fear and avoid all that threatens their personal independence. They have imbibed with their mothers' milk the sense of individuality. And surrender means giving up all that.

In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty. The question is to be sincere. If you are not sincere, do not begin Yoga. If you were dealing in human affairs, then you could resort to deception; but in dealing with the Divine there is no possibility of deception anywhere....

14 April 1929

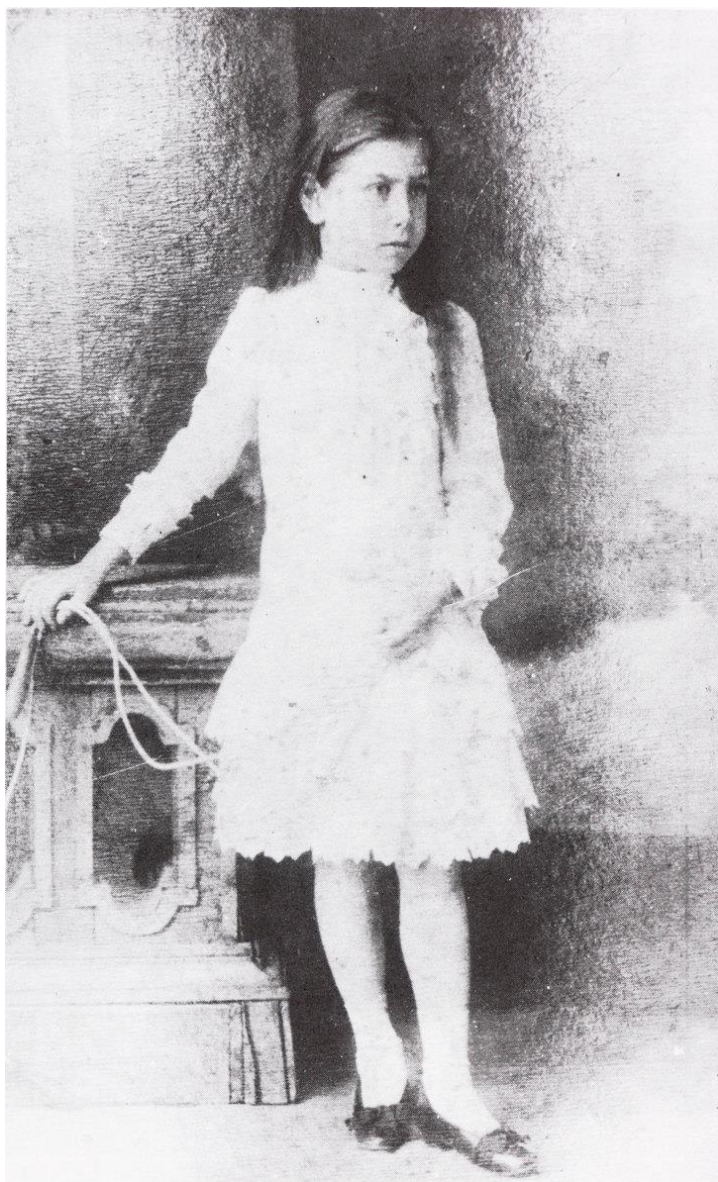
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Whatever be the way you follow, personal effort is always necessary till the moment of identification. At that moment all effort drops from you like a worn-out robe, you are another person: what was impossible for you becomes not only possible but indispensable, you cannot do otherwise.

10 February 1951



Mother with her brother Matteo in 1886



Mother at the age of eleven

Let Your Psychic Being Guide You

You have said that in a previous life we were together; but if we had not done Yoga, couldn't we have met all the same?

Not necessarily.

I remember the circumstances in which I said that; it was to a lady who had come here and asked me how it was that she had come here.... This is true in a general way; when those born scattered over the world at great distances from one another are driven by circumstances or by an impulsion to come and gather here, it is almost always because they have met in one life or another (not all in the same life) and because their psychic being has felt that they belonged to the same family; so they have taken an inner vow to continue to act together and collaborate. That is why even though they are born far from one another, there is something which compels them to come together; it is the psychic being, the psychic consciousness that is behind....

People meet and recognise each other only to the extent they become conscious of their psychic being, obey their psychic being, are guided by it; otherwise there is all that comes in to oppose it, all that veils, all that stupefies, all those obstacles to prevent you from finding yourself in your depths and being able to collaborate truly in the work. You are tossed about by the forces of Nature.

There is only one solution, to find your psychic being and once it is found to cling to it desperately, to let it guide you step by step whatever be the obstacle. That is the only solution.

All this I did not write but I explained it to that lady. She had put to me the question: “How did I happen to come here?” I told her that it was certainly not for reasons of the external consciousness, it was something in her inner being that had pushed her. Only the awakening was not strong enough to overcome all the rest and she returned to the ordinary life for very ordinary reasons of living.

Outwardly, it was a funny thing that had made her come here. She was a young woman like others, she had been betrothed but not married; the man had broken off. She was very unhappy, had wept much and that had spoiled her pretty face, dug wrinkles there. And when the heavy grief had gone, she was no longer so pretty. So she was extremely vexed; she consulted people whose profession it is to make you look pretty. They advised her paraffin injections in the face: “After that, you don’t have wrinkles any longer!” She was injected with fat; and instead of the desired effect, she had fatty lumps here and there. She was in despair, for she was uglier than ever. Then she met a charlatan who told her that in England there was no means of restoring her pretty face: “Go to India, there are great Yogis there who will do it for you!” That is why she had come here. The very first thing she told me was: “You see how my face is ruined, can you restore my pretty looks?” I said no! Then she started putting me questions on Yoga and she was moved. That day she told me: “I came to India to get rid of my wrinkles; now what you tell me interests me. But then why did I come? This is not the true motive that made me come here.” I explained to her that there was something other than her external being and that it was her psychic being which had led her

here. External motives are simply pretexts used by the psychic to realise itself.

But she was quite a wonderful person! In the beginning she had taken an attitude of benevolence and goodwill towards everything and everybody, even the worst scamp; she saw only the good side. Then as she stayed on, her consciousness developed; after a time, she began to see people as they were. So, one day she told me: “Formerly, when I was unconscious, I thought that everybody was good, people seemed to be so nice! Why did you make me conscious?” I answered her: “Do not stop on the way. Go a little further.”

Once one has begun Yoga, it is better to go to the end.

18 March 1953

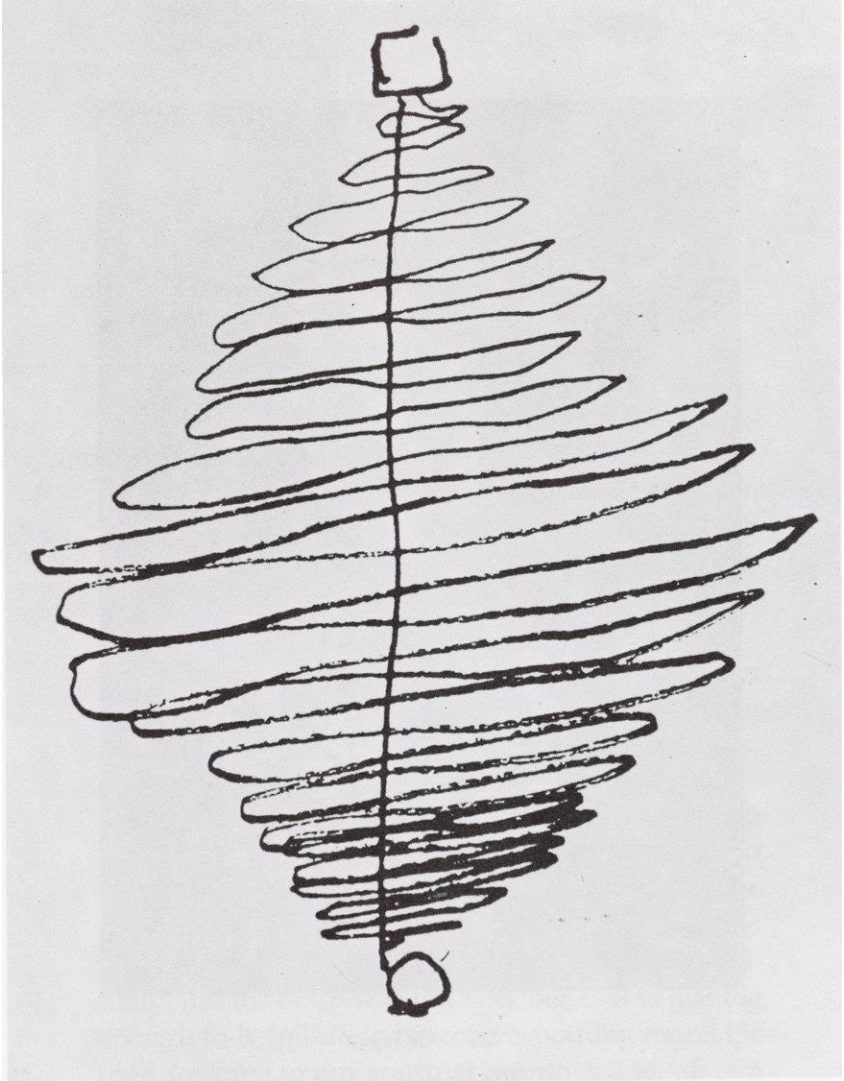
Purification

In the old Chaldean tradition, very often the young novices were given an image when they were invested with the white robe; they were told: “Do not try to remove the stains one by one, the whole robe must be purified.” Do not try to correct your faults one by one, to overcome your weaknesses one by one, it does not take you very far. The entire consciousness must be changed, a reversal of consciousness must be achieved, a springing up out of the state in which one is towards a higher state from which one dominates all the weaknesses one wants to heal, and from which one has a full vision of the work to be accomplished.

I believe Sri Aurobindo has said this: things are such that it may be said that nothing is done until everything is done. One step ahead is not enough, a total conversion is necessary.

How many times have I heard people who were making an effort say, “I try, but what’s the use of my trying? Every time I think I have gained something, I find that I must begin all over again.” This happens because they are trying to go forward while standing still, they are trying to progress without changing their consciousness. It is the entire point of view which must be shifted, the whole consciousness must get out of the rut in which it lies so as to rise up and see things from above. It is only thus that victories will not be changed into defeats.

26 December 1956



Mother drew this sketch to explain to a child the meaning of Yoga: man is below, the Divine above; the twists and turns represent the path of the ordinary life, the straight line, the path of Yoga.



Mother in Japan

Upset by the Experience of the Infinite

Are there any signs which indicate that one is ready for the path, especially if one has no spiritual teacher?

Yes, the most important indication is a perfect equality of soul in all circumstances. It is an absolutely indispensable basis....

A second sign: you feel completely imprisoned in your ordinary normal consciousness, as in something extremely hard, something suffocating and intolerable, as though you had to pierce a hole in a bronze wall....

There is yet another sign: when you concentrate and have an aspiration, you feel something coming down into you, you receive an answer; you feel a light, a peace, a force coming down....

If you are upset, it means that you have still much work to do upon your vital before it can be ready, it means there is a weakness somewhere. For some, the weakness is in the mind. I knew a boy in France who was a fine musician, he used to play the violin admirably. But his brain was not very big, it was just big enough to help him in his music, nothing more. He used to come to our spiritual meetings and, all of a sudden, he had the experience of the infinite in the finite; it was an absolutely true experience; in the finite individual came the experience of the infinite. But this upset the boy so much that he could make nothing at all of it! He could not even play his music any longer. The experience had to be stopped because it was too powerful for him. This is an instance where the mind was too weak.

He had the experience, truly, not the idea (the idea of the infinite is generally something foreign to all men). One must have the experience before the idea; for most men think only with words — if you put two contradictory ideas together, they no longer understand, while the experience is quite possible....

There are people — many — who are weak in their vital being. When they have this sensation of infinity, eternity, in their very small person, in their very little strength, it is so different from the impression they have constantly, that they understand nothing whatever. Then they fall sick or they begin to talk deliriously or to shout and dance.

But if you are absolutely sincere and look at yourself clear-sightedly, this cannot happen to you, for an experience which comes inopportunately like that is always the result of some pride or ambition or some lack of balance within, due to having neglected one part of the being for the benefit of another.

12 February 1951

Sri Aurobindo and the Cyclone

Is it really the best that always happens?... It is clear that all that has happened had to happen: it could not be otherwise — by the universal determinism it had to happen. But we can say so only after it has happened, not before. For the problem of the very best that can happen is an individual problem, whether the individual be a nation or a single human being; and all depends upon the personal attitude. If, in the presence of circumstances that are about to take place, you can take the highest attitude possible — that is, if you put your consciousness in contact with the highest consciousness within reach, you can be absolutely sure that in that case it is the best that can happen to you. But as soon as you fall from this consciousness into a lower state, then it is evidently not the best that can happen, for the simple reason that you are not in your very best consciousness. I even go so far as to affirm that in the zone of immediate influence of each one, the right attitude not only has the power to turn every circumstance to advantage but can change the very circumstance itself. For instance, when a man comes to kill you, if you remain in the ordinary consciousness and get frightened out of your wits, he will most probably succeed in doing what he came for; if you rise a little higher and though full of fear call for the divine help, he may just miss you, doing you a slight injury; if, however, you have the right attitude and the full consciousness of the Divine presence everywhere around you, he will not be able to lift even a finger against you....

If each of you did your utmost, then there would be the right collaboration and the result would be so much the quicker. I have

had innumerable examples of the power of right attitude. I have seen crowds saved from catastrophes by one single person keeping the right attitude. But it must be an attitude that does not remain somewhere very high and leaves the body to its usual reactions. If you remain high up like that, saying, "Let God's will be done", you may get killed all the same. For your body may be quite undivine, shivering with fear: the thing is to hold the true consciousness in the body itself and not have the least fear and be full of the divine peace. Then indeed there is no danger. Not only can attacks of men be warded off, but beasts also and even the elements can be affected. I can give you a little example. You remember the night of the great cyclone, when there was a tremendous noise and splash of rain all about the place. I thought I would go to Sri Aurobindo's room and help him shut the windows. I just opened his door and found him sitting quietly at his desk, writing. There was such a solid peace in the room that nobody would have dreamed that a cyclone was raging outside. All the windows were wide open, not a drop of rain was coming inside.

1930-1931

Plasticity

What is “plasticity”?

That which can easily change its form is “plastic”. Figuratively, it is suppleness, a capacity of adaptation to circumstances and necessities. When I ask you to be plastic in relation to the Divine, I mean not to resist the Divine with the rigidity of preconceived ideas and fixed principles. I knew a man who declared: “I am wholly consecrated to the Divine, I am ready to do whatever He tells me to do; but I am not at all worried, for I know that He would never tell me to kill anybody!” I answered, “How do you know that?” He was indignant. This is want of plasticity.

If one is plastic in all circumstances, isn't it a weakness?

But you are not asked to be plastic to the will of others! Nobody asked you to be plastic in relation to others. You are asked to be plastic to the divine Will — which is not quite the same thing! And that requires a great strength because the very first thing that will happen to you is to be exposed to the will of almost everyone around you. If you have a family, you will see the attitude of the family! The more plastic you are to the divine Will, the more opposition you will meet from the will of others who are not accustomed to be in contact with that Will.

If everybody expressed the divine Will, there would be no conflict any longer, anywhere, all would be in harmony. That is what one tries to do, but it is not very easy....

There are four conditions for knowing the divine Will:

The first essential condition: an absolute sincerity.

Second: to overcome desires and preferences.

Third: to silence the mind and listen.

Fourth: to obey immediately when you receive the order.

If you persist you will perceive the divine Will more and more clearly. But even before you know what it is, you can make an offering of your own will and you will see that all circumstances will be so arranged as to make you do the right thing. But you must not be like that person I knew who used to say, “I always see the divine Will in others.” That can land you anywhere, there is nothing more dangerous, for if you think you see the divine Will in others, you are sure to do their will, not the divine Will. There too we can say that not one among many, many human beings acts in accordance with the divine Will.

You know the story of the irritable elephant, his mahout, and the man who would not make way for the elephant. Standing in the middle of the road, the man said to the mahout, “The divine Will is in me and the divine Will wants me not to move.” The driver, a man of some wit, answered, “But the divine Will in the elephant wants you to move!”

14 March 1951

“We Shall Die Afterwards” ...

In what does a psychic being's progress consist?

Individualisation, the capacity to take up all experiences and organise them around the divine centre.

... the psychic being organises these experiences serially. It wants to realise a particular attitude towards the Divine. Hence it looks for all favourable experiences in order to have the complete series of opportunities, so to say, which will allow it to realise this attitude towards the Divine. Take someone, for example, who wants to have the experience of nobility — a nobility which makes it impossible for you to act like an ordinary person, which infuses into you a bravery, a courage which may almost be taken for rashness because the attitude, the experience demands that you face danger without showing the least fear. I was telling you a while ago that I would explain to you what one could acquire by entering into the body of a king. A king is an ordinary man, isn't he, like all others, he does not have a special consciousness, but through the necessities of his life, because he is a kind of symbol to his people, there are things he is obliged to do which he could never do if he were an ordinary man. I know this by experience, but I saw this also while looking at photographs which represented a king in actual circumstances: something had happened, which might have been an attempt on his life, but was averted. The photographs showed the king inspecting a regiment; all of a sudden someone had rushed forward, perhaps with a bad intention, perhaps not, for nothing had happened; in any case, the king had

remained completely impassive, absolutely calm, the same smile on his lips, without moving the least from the place where he was: and he was quite within sight, an easy target for one who wanted to rush forward and hurt him. For all I know, this king was not a hero, but because he was a king, he could not take to flight! That would have been ignoble. So he remained calm, without stirring, without showing any outward fear. This is an example of what one can learn in the life of a king.

There is also a true story about Queen Elizabeth. She had come to the last days of her life and was extremely ill. But there was trouble in the country and, about questions of taxation, a group of people (merchants, I believe) had formed a delegation to present a petition to her in the name of a party of the people. She lay very ill in her room, so ill that she could hardly stand. But she got up and dressed to receive them. The lady who was attending upon her cried out, "But it is impossible, you will die of this!" The queen answered quietly, "We shall die afterwards".... This is an example from a whole series of experiences one can have in the life of a king, and it is this which justifies the choice of the psychic being when it takes up this kind of life.

It is memories of this kind which prove the authenticity of the experience; for what generally happens when people tell you about their past lives is this: in these lives there is always a progress, naturally; so they become more and more splendid people in more and more marvellous circumstances! It is wrong, things never happen like that. The psychic being follows a certain line of existence which develops certain qualities, certain powers, etc., but the psychic being always sees what it lacks and it can

choose the opposite line in a future life, a negation, so to say, of this experience in order to have complementary experiences.

24 February 1951

An Old Chaldean Legend

Long, long ago, in the dry land which is now Arabia, a divine being incarnated upon earth to awaken in it the supreme love. As expected it was persecuted by men, misunderstood, suspected, pursued. Mortally wounded by its assailants, it wanted to die quietly in solitude in order to be able to accomplish its work, and being pursued, it ran away. Suddenly, in the vast desert land there appeared a small pomegranate bush. The saviour crept in under the low branches, to leave its body in peace; and immediately the bush spread out miraculously, it grew higher, larger, became deep and thick, so that when the pursuers passed by, they did not even suspect that the One whom they were chasing was hidden there, and they went their way.

While drop by drop the sacred blood fell, fertilising the soil, the bush was covered with marvellous flowers, scarlet, large, crowded with petals... innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers which express and contain for us the Divine's Love.

Sweet Mother, has that Chaldean legend which you have written any relation with Kali Puja?

Yes, my child, because on Kali Puja day I always distribute the flowers of "Divine's Love"; for Kali is the most loving of all the aspects of the Mahashakti; hers is the most active and most powerful Love. And that is why every year I distribute the petals of "Divine's Love" on Kali's Day. And so naturally this



Durga Puja on 5 October 1954



Kali Puja on 25 October 1954

explanation of why these flowers were chosen to express the Divine's Love... is a sufficient explanation.

Mother, who was this man you have spoken about?

Who told you that it was a man? I haven't said whether it was a man or a woman. I took care to put only "a divine being".

Who?

It is a prehistoric story, so you cannot find any information about it. It isn't written anywhere. There are no written documents.

16 November 1955

Abdul Baha: The “Sacrifice” of the Divine

Many religions are founded upon the idea of sacrifice; for instance, all the Chaldean religions. The reforms of the Muslim religion also had a very strong tendency towards sacrifice. All the first adepts, the first faithful, paid with their life for changing their religion....

We speak of the “sacrifice” of the Divine. But I have noticed that this is called “sacrifice” when one understands that if obliged to do it oneself it would be very difficult! It would give you much pain, it would be very hard (*laughing*), so one speaks of sacrifice, but it is probable that for the Divine it was not painful and he did it willingly, with all the joy of self-giving.

I knew Abdul Baha very well, the successor of Baha Ullah, founder of the Bahai religion; Abdul Baha was his son. He was born in prison and lived in prison till he was forty, I believe. When he came out of prison his father was dead and he began to preach his father’s religion. He told me his story and what had happened in Persia at the beginning of the religion. And I remember him telling me with what intense joy, what a sense of the divine Presence, of the divine Force, these people went to the sacrifice — it can’t be called “sacrifice”, it was a very joyful gift of their life... He always spoke to me of someone who was, it appears, a very great poet and who had been arrested as a heretic because he followed the Bahai religion. They wanted to take him away to kill him — or burn him, hang him, crucify him, I don’t know what,

the manner of death in vogue at the time — and, because he expressed his faith and said he would be happy to suffer anything for his faith and his God, people devised the plan of fixing small lighted candle-ends on his body, his arms, his shoulders. Naturally the candles melted with the hot wax all over, till the wick of the candle burnt the skin. It seems Abdul Baha was there when this man was tortured and as they came to the spot where he was to be killed, Abdul Baha went up to speak to him affectionately — and he was in an ecstasy of joy. Abdul Baha spoke to him of his sufferings; he replied, “Suffer! it is one of the most beautiful hours of my life...” This cannot be called a sacrifice, can it?

14 April 1951

To Claim Independence Is to Deny Love

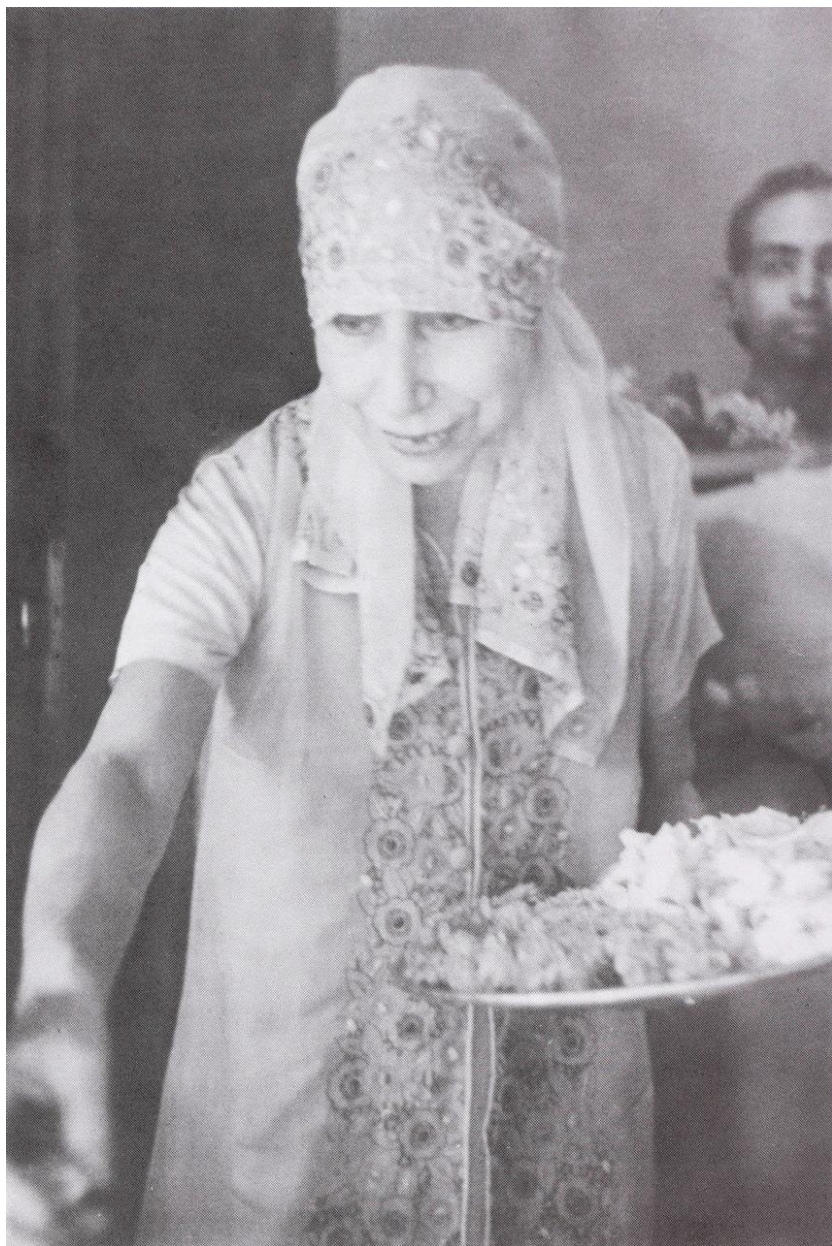
Outwardly one cannot conceive how one can be at once in freedom and in servitude, but there is an attitude which reconciles the two and makes them one of the happiest states of material existence.

Freedom is a sort of instinctive need, a necessity for the integral development of the being. In its essence it is a perfect realisation of the highest consciousness, it is the expression of Unity and of union with the Divine, it is the very sense of the origin and the fulfilment. But because this Unity has manifested in the many — in the multiplicity — something had to serve as a link between the Origin and the manifestation, and the most perfect link one can conceive of is love. And what is the first gesture of love? To give oneself, to serve. What is its spontaneous, immediate, inevitable movement? To serve. To serve in a joyous, complete, total self-giving....

So the two are closely united in the Truth. But here on earth, in this world of ignorance and inconstancy, this service which should have been spontaneous, full of love, the very expression of love, has become something imposed, an inevitable necessity, performed only for the maintenance of life, for the continuation of existence, and thus it has become something ugly, miserable — humiliating. What should have been a flowering, a joy, has become an ugliness, a weariness, a sordid obligation. And this sense, this need for freedom has also been deformed and has become that kind of thirst for independence which leads straight



Durga Puja on 7 October 1954; Vijayadashami, Victory Day



Mother in 1950

to revolt, to separation, isolation, the very opposite of true freedom.

Independence!... I remember having heard an old occultist and sage give a beautiful reply to someone who said, "I want to be independent! I am an independent being! I exist only when I am independent!" And the other answered him with a smile, "Then that means that nobody will love you, because if someone loves you, you immediately become dependent on this love."

It is a beautiful reply, for it is indeed love which leads to Unity and it is Unity which is the true expression of freedom. And so those who in the name of their right to freedom claim independence, turn their backs completely on this true freedom, for they deny love.

6 March 1957

The Speculator

If you use power to show that you possess it, it becomes so full of falsehood and untruth that finally it disappears. But it is not always thus, because, as I said at the beginning, when it concerns a power like the power of healing or the power of changing an altogether external thing — of making an unfavourable circumstance favourable, of finding lost objects, all these countless little “miracles” which are found in all religions — it is much more easy and even more effective to do these “miracles” with the help of the entities of the vital world which are not always recommendable, far from it; and then these beings make fun of you. This begins very well, very brilliantly, and usually finishes very badly.

I know the story of a man who had a few small powers and indulged in all kinds of so-called “spiritual” practices, and through repeated exercises he had succeeded in coming into conscious contact with what he called a “spirit”. This man was doing business; he was a financier and was even a speculator. His relations with his “spirit” were of a very practical kind! This spirit used to tell him when the stocks and shares would go up and when they would come down; it told him, “Sell this”, “Buy that” — it gave him very precise financial particulars. For years he had been listening to his “spirit” and had followed it, and was fantastically successful; he became tremendously rich and naturally boasted a lot about the spirit which “guided” him. He used to tell everybody, “You see, it is really worthwhile learning how to put oneself in contact with these spirits.” But one day he met a man who was a

little wiser, who told him. "Take care." He did not listen to him, he was swollen with his power and ambition. And it was then that his "spirit" gave him a last advice, "Now you can become the richest man in the world. Your ambition will be fulfilled. You have only to follow my direction. Do this: put all that you have into this transaction and you will become the richest man in the world." The stupid fool did not even realise the trap laid for him: for years he had followed his "guide" and succeeded, so he followed the last direction; and he lost everything, to the last penny.

So you see, these are small entities who make fun of you, and to make sure of you they work these little miracles to encourage you, and when they feel that you are well trapped, they play a fine trick upon you and it is all over with you.

We have said that there is only one safety, never to act except in harmony with the divine Will. There is one question: how to know that it is the divine Will which makes you act? I replied to the person who put to me this question (although this person did not agree with me) that it is not difficult to distinguish the voice of the Divine: one cannot make a mistake. You need not be very far on the path to be able to recognise it; you must listen to the still, small, peaceful voice which speaks in the silence of your heart.

I forgot one thing: to hear it you must be absolutely sincere, for if you are not sincere, you will begin by deceiving yourself and you will hear nothing at all except the voice of your ego and then you will commit with assurance (thinking that it is the real small voice) the most awful stupidities. But if you are sincere, the method is sure.

8 February 1951

The Perforated Coin

Sri Aurobindo used to say, you know, that to wear a ring with his portrait and think that it protects you, is a superstition! He would tell you it is a superstition! That is, it depends on what you think about it... It depends solely on what you think about it. If he had given you a ring, saying, “Wear this, my force will be with you”, then it would have been altogether different; there’s a world of difference.

I shall tell you another little story. Long ago some people used to believe that a perforated coin... It was in the days when coins were not perforated... now we have perforated coins, don’t we, some countries have perforated coins, but in those days they were not perforated, and yet sometimes there were holes in a coin. And there was indeed a superstition like that, that when one found a perforated coin, it brought good luck. It brought you good luck and success in what you wanted to do.

There was a man working in an office whose life was rather poor and who was not very successful, and one day he found a perforated coin. He put it in his pocket and said to himself, “Now I am going to prosper!” And he was full of hope, courage, energy, because he knew: “Now that I have the coin, I am sure to succeed!” And, in fact, he went on prospering, prospering more and more. He earned more and more money, he had a better and better position, and people said. “What a wonderful man! How well he works! How he finds all the solutions to all problems!” Indeed, he became a remarkable man, and every morning when he

put on his coat, he felt it — like this — to be sure that his coin was in his pocket... He touched it, he felt that the coin was there, and he had confidence. And then, one day, he was a little curious, and said, “I am going to see my coin!” — years later. He was having his breakfast with his wife and said, “I am going to see my coin!” His wife told him, “Why do you want to see it? It’s not necessary.” “Yes, yes, let me see my coin.” He took out the little bag in which he kept the coin, and found inside a coin which was not perforated!

“Ah,” he said, “this is not my coin! What is this? Who has changed my coin?” Then his wife told him, “Look, one day there was some dust on your coat... I shook it off through the window and the coin fell out. I had forgotten that the coin was there. I ran to look for it but didn’t find it. Someone had picked it up. So I thought you would be very unhappy and I put another coin there.” (*Laughter*) Only, he, of course, was confident that his coin was there and that was enough.

It is the faith, the trust that does it, you see... The perforated coin gives you nothing at all. You can always try.

Voilà!

14 July 1954

One Is Not Built up of One Single Piece

I have told you many times and I could not repeat it too often, that one is not built up of one single piece. We have within us many states of being and each state of being has its own life. All this is put together in one single body, so long as you have a body, and acts through that single body; so that gives you the feeling that it is one single person, a single being. But there are many beings and particularly there are concentrations on different levels: just as you have a physical being, you have a vital being, you have a mental being, you have a psychic being, you have many others and all possible intermediaries.... When you are about to leave your body, all these beings start to disperse. Only if you are a very advanced yogi and have been able to unify your being around the divine centre, do these beings remain bound together. If you have not been able to unify yourself, then at the time of death all that is dispersed: each one returns to its domain.... But if you have united your consciousness with the psychic consciousness, when you die you remain conscious of your psychic being and the psychic being returns to the psychic world which is a world of bliss and delight and peace and tranquillity and of a growing knowledge....

But if you have lived in your vital with all its impulses, each impulse will try to realise itself here and there... For example, a miser who is concentrated upon his money, when he dies, the part of the vital that was interested in his money will be stuck there and will continue to watch over the money so that nobody may take it. People do not see him, but he is there all the same, and is very

unhappy if something happens to his precious money. I knew quite well a lady who had a good amount of money and children; she had five children who were all prodigals, each one more than the other. The same amount of care she had taken in amassing the money, they seemed to take in squandering it; they spent it at random. So when the poor old lady died, she came to see me and told me: “Ah, now they are going to squander my money!” And she was extremely unhappy. I consoled her a little, but I had a good deal of difficulty in persuading her not to keep watching over her money so that it might not be wasted.

1 July 1953

Trance

Is the state of trance or Samadhi a sign of progress?

In ancient times it was considered a very high condition. It was even thought to be the sign of a great realisation, and people who wanted to do yoga or sadhana always tried to enter into a state of this kind. All sorts of marvellous things have been said about this state — you may say all you like about it, since, precisely, you don't remember anything! And those who have entered it are unable to say what happened to them. So, one can say anything one likes.

I could incidentally tell you that in all kinds of so-called spiritual literature I had always read marvellous things about this state of trance or Samadhi, and it so happened that I had never experienced it. So I did not know whether this was a sign of inferiority. And when I came here, one of my first questions to Sri Aurobindo was: “What do you think of Samadhi, that state of trance one does not remember? One enters into a condition which seems blissful, but when one comes out of it, one does not know at all what has happened.” Then he looked at me, saw what I meant and told me, “It is unconsciousness.” I asked him for an explanation, I said, “What?” He told me, “Yes, you enter into what is called Samadhi when you go out of your conscious being and enter a part of your being which is completely unconscious, or rather a domain where you have no corresponding consciousness — you go beyond the field of your consciousness and enter a region where you are no longer conscious. You are in the

impersonal state, that is to say, a state in which you are unconscious; and that is why, naturally, you remember nothing, because you were not conscious of anything.”¹ So this reassured me and I said, “Well, this has never happened to me.” He replied, “Nor to me!” (*Laughter*)

And since then, when people speak to me about Samadhi, I tell them, “Well, try to develop your inner individuality and you will be able to enter these very regions in full consciousness and have the joy of communion with the highest regions, but without losing all consciousness and returning with a zero instead of an experience.”

So that is my reply to the person who has asked if Samadhi or trance is a sign of progress. The sign of progress is when there is no longer any unconsciousness, when one can go up into the same regions without entering into trance.

22 August 1956

¹ When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following commentary: “There are also some people who enter domains where they are conscious, but between this conscious state and their normal waking consciousness there is a gap: their personality does not exist between the waking state and this deeper state; so, during the passage they forget. They cannot bring the consciousness they had there back into the consciousness here, for there is a gap between the two. There is even an occult discipline for constructing intermediary fields in order to be able to recall things.”

True Spontaneity

To be spontaneous means not to think, organise, decide and make an effort to realise with the personal will.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One — you all know about it undoubtedly — happened at the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*,¹ in 1914, It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge — and even the expression — from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

That is true mental spontaneity.

And if one carries this a little further, one should never think and plan beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should simply be able to silence one's mind, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and express as it receives it, in

¹ It was in the review *Arya*, within a period of six and a half years (1914-1921), that Sri Aurobindo published most of his major works: *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* (originally *The Psychology of Social Development*), *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Future Poetry*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (originally a number of series under other titles).

mental silence, what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not very easy, it asks for preparation.

29 August 1956

Are You Sure You Have Locked the Door?

One knows that something is true but still doubts. Why does one doubt the truth?

The usual answer, it is because one is foolish! (*Laughter*)

But the truth is that the physical mind is truly completely stupid! You can prove it very easily. It is constructed probably as a kind of control, and in order to make sure that things are done as they ought to be. I think that this is its normal work... But it has made it a habit to doubt everything.

I think I have already told you about the small experiment I made one day. I removed my control and left the control to the physical mind — it is the physical mind which doubts. So I made the following experiment: I went into a room, then came out of the room and closed the door. I had decided to close the door; and when I came to another room, this mind, the material mind, the physical mind, you see, said, “Are you sure you have locked the door?” Now, I did not control, you know... I said, “Very well, I obey it!” I went back to see. I observed that the door was closed. I came back. As soon as I couldn’t see the door any longer, it told me, “Have you verified properly?” So I went back again.... And this went on till I decided: “Come now, that’s enough, isn’t it? Closed or not, I am not going back any more to see!” This could have gone on the whole day. It is made like that. It stops being like that only when a higher mind, the rational mind tells it, “Keep quiet!” Otherwise it goes on indefinitely.... So, if by ill-luck you

are centred there, in this mind, even the things you know higher up as quite true, even things of which you have a physical proof — like that of the closed door, it doubts, it will doubt, because it is made of doubt. It will always say, “Are you quite sure this is true?... Isn’t it an idea of yours?... You don’t suppose it is like that?” And it will go on until one teaches it to keep quiet and be silent.

14 July 1954

Miracles

It has been repeated over and over again to all human intellects that the proof of a being's divinity is that he can raise the dead, cure maladies, and do many other things of the same kind (except making a fool wise).¹ Well, I guarantee that this is not a proof; it proves only one thing, that these "masters" are in contact with the powers of the vital world and that with the help of those beings they can perform these miracles, that's all. If one relies upon that to recognise the superiority of a man, one would make a glaring mistake....

If you take the purely material domain, for instance, and if you notice that the material laws, the purely material laws are altered by something all of a sudden, you ought to say that it was a "miracle", because there is a rupture of the determinism of one plane through the intervention of another, but usually we do not call this a miracle. For example, when the human will intervenes and changes something, that seems to you quite natural, because you have been accustomed to it from your childhood; you remember, don't you, the example I gave you the other day: a stone falls according to the law of its own determinism, but you wish to interrupt its fall and you stretch out your hand and catch it; well you ought to call this a "miracle", but you don't because

¹ Mother added later: This is a Mohammedan story, I believe. As it was said that Jesus raised the dead, healed the sick, made the dumb speak, gave sight to the blind, one day an idiot was brought to him, to be made intelligent and Jesus ran away! "Why did you run away?" he was asked. "I can do everything," he answered, "except give intelligence to an idiot."

you are used to it (but a rat or a dog would perhaps call it a miracle if they could speak). And note that it is the same for what people call a “miracle”; they speak of a “miracle” because they are absolutely ignorant, unaware of the gradations between the will which wants to express itself and the plane on which it expresses itself. When they have a mental or a vital will, the thing seems quite natural to them, but when it is a question of the will of a higher world — the world of the gods or of a higher entity — which all of a sudden upsets all your little organisation, that seems to you a miracle. But it is a miracle simply because you are unable to follow the gradations by which the phenomenon took place. Therefore, the Supreme Will, that which comes from the very highest region, if you saw it in its logical action, if you were aware of it continually, it would seem to you altogether natural....

There is a “miracle” because you do not give people time to see the procedure by which you do things, you do not show them the stages. Thus, some men have reached higher mental regions and do not need to follow step by step all the gradations of thought; they can jump from one idea to a far distant inference without the intermediary links... It is an experience I have had; when I used to speak with Sri Aurobindo, we never had the need to go through intermediary ideas; he said one thing and I saw the far off result; we used to talk always like that, and if a person had happened to be present at our conversations he would have said, “What are they talking about!” But for us, you know, it was as clear as a continuous sentence. You could call that a mental miracle — it was not a miracle, it was simply that Sri Aurobindo had the vision of the totality of mental phenomena and hence we had no need to

waste a good deal of time in going through all the gradations. For any person capable of following the line, the thing would have been quite natural and logical; for ignorant people it was a “miracle”.

8 February 1951

“Take a Remedy While It Is in Fashion”

If you have studied enough or lived long enough, that is, a fairly good number of years, you will find that with the same authority, the same certitude, the same conviction, at one time certain things are not only considered bad, but on the basis of an absolute knowledge, an unquestionable observation, they are reputed to have a certain effect, and at another time these very unquestionable observations lead to diametrically opposite results. Very often I give an example which I happened to observe, especially as regards the value of certain foods and their effects on the body, like certain fruits or vegetables; at a particular time in medical history — not so long ago, about fifty or sixty years ago — when you had a certain illness, the doctor gave you a list of things recommending to you with absolute seriousness not to touch any of these lest you become even more ill — I could give you the list, but it is not interesting. Well, about these very same things, fifty or sixty years later, not the same doctor perhaps but another one will tell you with the same seriousness, the same unquestionable certitude and authority that these are the very things you must eat if you want to be cured! So if you have observed things pretty well and have a slightly critical mind, you can tell yourself, “Oh! it must depend on people or perhaps on the period.” And I shall tell you, as the doctor-friend I knew in France forty or fifty years ago used to tell all his patients, “Take a remedy while it is in fashion, for then it will cure you.”

21 November 1956

Vibrations from Another World

One thing that is now beginning to be recognised by everyone, even by the medical corps, is that hygienic measures, for example, are effective only to the extent that one has confidence in them. Take the case of an epidemic. Many years ago we had a cholera epidemic here — it was bad — but the chief medical officer of the hospital was an energetic man: he decided to vaccinate everybody. When he discharged the vaccinated men, he would tell them, “Now you are vaccinated and nothing will happen to you, but if you were not vaccinated you would be sure to die!” He told them this with great authority. Generally such an epidemic lasts a long time and it is difficult to arrest it, but in some fifteen days, I think, this doctor succeeded in checking it; in any case, it was done miraculously fast. But he knew very well that the best effect of his vaccination was the confidence it gave to people.

Now, quite recently, they have found something else and I consider it wonderful. They have discovered that for every disease there is a microbe that cures it (call it a microbe if you like, anyway, some sort of germ). But what is so extraordinary is that this “microbe” is extremely contagious, even more contagious than the microbe of the disease. And it generally develops under two conditions: in those who have a sort of natural good humour and energy and in those who have a strong will to get well! Suddenly they catch the “microbe” and are cured. And what is wonderful is that if there is one who is cured in an epidemic, three more recover immediately. And this “microbe” is found in all who are cured.

But I am going to tell you something: what people take to be a microbe is simply the materialisation of a vibration or a will from another world. When I learned of these medical discoveries, I said to myself, “Truly, science is making progress.”

14 March 1951

Hypnotism and Surgery

Now they are finding out that they can replace anaesthetics by hypnotism with infinitely better results. Well, hypnotism is a form — a form modernised in its expression — of occultism; a very limited, very small form of a very tiny power compared with occult power, but still it is a form of occultism which has been put in modern terms to make the thing modern. And I don't know if you have heard about these things, but they are very interesting from a certain point of view; for instance, this process of hypnotism has been tried on someone who had to have a skin-graft on a wound. I don't remember all the details now, but the arm had to remain attached to the leg for a fortnight... If the person were immobilised by plaster and bandages and all sorts of things, at the end of the fortnight he wouldn't be able to move — everything would become stiff and he would need weeks of treatment to recover the free use of his arm. In this case, nothing was tied up, nothing was physically immobilised — no plaster, no bandages, nothing — the person was just hypnotised and told to keep his arm in that position. He kept it for a fortnight, without any effort, any difficulty, without any intervention from his will: it was the will of the hypnotiser which intervened. It was perfectly successful, the arm remained in the required position, and when the fortnight was over and the hypnotism removed, and the person was told, "Now you may move", he began to move! Well, that's a step forward.

They [science and occultism] are soon going to meet — it will be nothing more than a question of words — then, if they are not too rigid, they can agree on the value given to the words!

Sweet Mother, they say hypnotism has a bad aftereffect on the hypnotised person?

No, no! If somebody practises hypnotism to impose his will on another, it can obviously do much harm to the other person, but we are speaking of a hypnotism which is practised in a humanitarian way, it might be said, and for precise reasons.

All the bad effects can be avoided if the one who does it has no bad intentions.

If you use chemical formulas in an ignorant way, you can cause an explosion (*laughter*), and that is very dangerous! Well, if you use occult formulas ignorantly — or egoistically, which is even worse than ignorantly — you can also have harmful results. But that doesn't mean that occultism is bad or hypnotism is bad or chemistry is bad. You are not going to ban chemistry because there are people who cause explosions! (*Laughter*)

10 September 1958

The Yogi's Tooth

If the whole being could simultaneously advance in its progressive transformation, keeping pace with the inner march of the universe, there would be no illness, there would be no death. But it would have to be literally the whole being integrally from the highest planes, where it is more plastic and yields in the required measure to transforming forces, down to the most material, which is by nature rigid, stationary, refractory to any rapid remoulding change.

There are certain regions which offer a much stronger resistance than others to the action of the Yogic forces, and the illnesses affecting them are harder to cure. They are those parts that belong to the most material layers of the being, and the illnesses that pertain to them, as, for instance, skin diseases or bad teeth. Sri Aurobindo spoke once of a Yogi who, still enjoying robust health and a magnificent physique, had been living for nearly a century on the banks of the Narmada. Offered by a disciple medicine for a toothache, he observed, in refusing, that one tooth had given him trouble for the last two hundred years. This Yogi had secured so much control over material nature as to live two hundred years, but in all that time he had not been able to conquer a toothache.

16 June 1929

Getting Blows in Dreams

If in the dream someone kills you it doesn't matter, for it is just a dream!

I beg your pardon! Usually, the next day you are ill, or may be a little later. That's a warning. I know someone whose eye was thus hurt in a dream, and who really lost his eye a few days later. As for me, once I happened to dream getting blows on my face. Well, when I woke up the next morning, I had a red mark in the same place, on the forehead and the cheek... Inevitably, a wound received in the vital being is translated in the physical body.

It was in the vital that I was beaten. It is from within that this comes. Nothing, nobody touched anything from outside. If you receive a blow in the vital, the body suffers the consequence. More than half of our illnesses are the result of blows of this kind, and this happens much oftener than one believes. Only, men are not conscious of their vital, and as they are not conscious they don't know that fifty per cent of their illnesses are the result of what happens in the vital: shocks, accidents, fighting, ill-will... Externally this is translated into an illness. If one knows how it reacts on the physical, one goes to its source and can cure oneself in a few hours.

29 April 1953

The Sense of Beauty

In one of your writings you have said that beauty is universal and that one must be universal in order to see and recognise it.

Yes. I mean one must have a universal consciousness in order to see and recognise it. For instance, if your consciousness is limited to one place, that is, it is a national consciousness (the consciousness of any one country), what is beautiful for one country is not beautiful for another. The sense of beauty is different. For example (I could make you laugh with a story), I knew in Paris the son of the king of Dahomey (he was a negro — the king of Dahomey was a negro) and this boy had come to Paris to study Law. He used to speak French like a Frenchman. But he had remained a negro, you understand. And he was asked (he used to tell us all kinds of stories about his life as a student), someone asked him in front of me: “Well, when you marry, whom will you marry?” — “Ah! a girl from my country, naturally, they alone are beautiful...” (*Laughter*) Now, for those who are not negroes, negro beauty is a little difficult to see! And yet, this was quite spontaneous. He was fully convinced it was impossible for anyone to think otherwise... “Only the women of my country are beautiful!”

It is the same thing everywhere. Only those who have developed a little artistic taste, have travelled much and seen many things have widened their consciousness and they are no longer so sectarian. But it is very difficult to pull a person out of the

specialised tastes of his race — I am not even speaking now of the country, I am speaking of the race. It is very difficult. It is there, you know, hidden right at the bottom, in the subconscious, and it comes back without your even noticing it, quite spontaneously, quite naturally. Even on this very point: the woman of your race is always much more beautiful than the woman of other races — spontaneously, it is the spontaneous taste. That's what I mean. So, you must rise above that. I am not even speaking of those who find everything that's outside their own family or caste very ugly and bad. I am not speaking at all of these people. I am not even speaking of those for whom one country is much more beautiful than another. And yet, these people have already risen above the altogether ordinary way of thinking. I am not even speaking of a question of race.... it is very difficult, one must go right down, right down within oneself into the subconscious — and even farther — to discover the root of these things. Therefore, if you want to have the sense of beauty in itself — which is quite independent of all these tastes, the taste of the race — you must have a universal consciousness. Otherwise how can you have it? You will always have preferences.

22 October 1953

The World of Harmony

Music... is an essentially spiritual art and has always been associated with religious feeling and an inner life....

Among the great modern musicians there have been several whose consciousness, when they created, came into touch with a higher consciousness. César Franck played on the organ as one inspired; he had an opening into the psychic life and he was conscious of it and to a great extent expressed it. Beethoven, when he composed the Ninth Symphony, had the vision of an opening into a higher world and of the descent of a higher world into this earthly plane. Wagner had strong and powerful intimations of the occult world; he had the instinct of occultism and the sense of the occult and through it he received his greatest inspirations. But he worked mainly in the vital level and his mind came in constantly to interfere and mechanised his inspiration. His work for the greater part is too mixed, too often obscure and heavy, although powerful. But when he could cross the vital and the mental levels and reach a higher world, some of the glimpses he had were of an exceptional beauty, as in Parsifal, in some parts of Tristan and Iseult and most in its last great Act.

Look again at what the moderns have made of the dance; compare it with what the dance once was. The dance was once one of the highest expressions of the inner life; it was associated with religion and it was an important limb in sacred ceremony, in the celebration of festivals, in the adoration of the Divine. In some countries it reached a very high degree of beauty and an

extraordinary perfection. In Japan they kept up the tradition of the dance as a part of the religious life and, because the strict sense of beauty and art is a natural possession of the Japanese, they did not allow it to degenerate into something of lesser significance and smaller purpose. It was the same in India....

There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. For instance, there is a certain line of music, consisting of a few supreme notes, that was behind the productions of two artists who came one after another — one a concerto of Bach, another a concerto of Beethoven. The two are not alike on paper and differ to the outward ear, but in their essence they are the same. One and the same vibration of consciousness, one wave of significant harmony touched both these artists. Beethoven caught a larger part, but in him it was more mixed with the inventions and interpolations of his mind; Bach received less, but what he seized of it was purer. The vibration was that of the victorious emergence of consciousness, consciousness tearing itself out of the womb of unconsciousness in a triumphant uprising and birth. This vibration had its origin in the world of Harmony of which I have just spoken to you now.

28 July 1929

A Reincarnation of Beethoven

After death, does the inner being continue to progress?

That depends altogether upon the person. For everyone it is different. There are people — for example, writers, musicians, artists — people who have lived on intellectual heights, who feel that they still have something further to do, that they have not finished what they had undertaken to do, have not reached the goal they had fixed for themselves, so they are ready to remain in the earth atmosphere as long as they can, with as much cohesiveness as possible and they try to manifest themselves and continue their progress in other human bodies. I have seen many such cases, I have seen the very interesting case of a musician who was a pianist (a pianist of great worth), who had hands which were a marvel of skill, accuracy, precision, force, rapidity of movement, indeed, it was absolutely remarkable. This man died relatively young with the feeling that if he had continued to live he would have continued to progress in his expression of music. And such was the intensity of his aspiration that his subtle hands maintained their form without being dissolved, and each time he met anyone a little receptive and passive and a good musician, his hands would enter the hands of those who were playing — the person who was playing at the time could play well but in an ordinary way: but at that moment he became not merely a virtuoso but a wonderful artist during the time he played. It was the hands of the other that were making use of him. This is a phenomenon I know. I have seen the same thing in the case of a painter: it was also a matter of

hands. The same thing with regard to some writers, and here it was the brain that kept quite a precise form and entered the brain of someone who was sufficiently receptive and suddenly made him write extraordinary things, infinitely more beautiful than anything he had written before. I saw that taking hold of someone. It was in the case of a composer of music — not one of those who execute, but who compose, like Beethoven, like Bach, like Cesar Franck (but Cesar Franck executed also). The composition of music is an extremely cerebral activity. Well, here also the brain of a great musician came in contact with one who was engaged in writing an opera and made him compose wonderful things and arranged on paper all the parts. He was busy writing an opera and it is extremely complex for the performers who have to bring out in the music the thought of the person who has composed it; and that man (I knew him) when he received this formation had a blank paper before him and then he started writing; I saw him writing, putting lines, then some figures, on a big, very big page and when he reached the bottom, the orchestration of the Overture (for example, of a certain act) was completed (orchestration means the distribution of certain lines of music to each one of the instruments). And he was doing it simply on a paper, merely by this wonderful mental power. And it was not only his own: it was coming to him from a musical mind that incarnated in him.... Whilst I was there I saw him writing in front of me a page like that: it took him about half an hour or three quarters of an hour. And he got such a reputation that even big well-known musicians brought him their works for orchestration. He did it better than anyone, and just in that way on his paper. He had no need to hear

or anything. Afterwards, it was tried out and it was always very good. There were so many violins, so many violoncellos, so many altos, all the instruments: some were playing this, others playing that, yet others playing other things, sometimes all together, at other times one after another (it is very complicated, not a simple thing), well, there, while playing, hearing or even reading (sometimes he took the score and read it) he knew which notes had to be distributed to which instrument, which notes had to be played by another, and so on. And he had very clearly the feeling of something entering into him and helping him.

... I explained to you the other day that before leaving the physical body, the psychic being decides most often what its next rebirth will be, the environment in which it will take birth and what its occupation will be, because it needs a certain field for its experience. So it may happen that very big writers and very big musicians take birth another time in somebody quite imbecile. And you say: “Why! it is not possible!” Naturally it does not always happen like that, but it may. There was a case in which the contrary happened: it was a violin player, the most wonderful of the century... (*Mother tries to remember.*) Just wait, I knew his name and it is gone — it came back and is gone again. What was his name?... Ysayë! he was a Belgian and a violinist, truly the most wonderful violinist of the epoch. Well, that man had most certainly in him a reincarnation of Beethoven. Not perhaps a reincarnation of his entire psychic being, but in any case, that of his musical capacity. He had the appearance, the head of Beethoven, I saw him, I heard him (I did not know him, I knew nothing, I was at a concert in Paris and they were giving the

concerto in D major), I saw him coming on the stage to play and I said: "Strange! How much this man looks like Beethoven, he is the very portrait of Beethoven!" Then it just started with a stroke of the bow, three, four notes... Everything changed, the atmosphere was changed. All became absolutely wonderful. Three notes started off with such power, such grandeur, so wonderful it was, nothing stirred, all waited. And he played that from beginning to end in an absolutely unique manner with an understanding I have not met with in any other executant. And then I saw that the musical genius of Beethoven was in him... But perhaps Beethoven's psychic being had taken body in a shoemaker or anybody else, one does not know! It wanted to have another kind of experience.

16 September 1953

Palette-scrappings

Why is modern art so ugly?

I believe the chief reason is that people have become more and more lazy and do not want to work. They want to produce something before having worked, they want to know before having studied and they want to make a name before having done anything good. So, this is the open door for all sorts of things, as we see... Naturally, there are exceptions.

I have known artists who were great artists, who had worked hard and produced remarkable things, classical, that is, not ultramodern. But they were not in fashion because, precisely, one had not to be classical. When a brush was put in the hands of an individual who had never touched a brush, and when a brush was put on a palette of colours and the man had never touched a palette before, then if this individual had in front of him a bit of canvas on an easel and he had never done a picture before, naturally he daubed anything at all; he took the colours and threw them in a haphazard way; then everybody cried out “Admirable!”, “Marvellous!”, “It is the expression of your soul!”, “How well this reveals the truth of things!”, etc. This was the fashion and people who knew nothing were very successful. The poor men who had worked, who knew their art well, were not asked for their pictures any longer; people said, “Oh! this is old-fashioned, you will never find customers for such things.” But, after all, they were hungry, you see, they had to pay their rent and buy their colours and all the rest, and that is costly. Then what could they do? When they had

received rebuffs from the picture-dealers who all told them the same thing, "But try to be modern, my friend; look here, you are behind the times", as they were very hungry, what could they do?... I knew a painter, a disciple of Gustav Moreau; he was truly a very fine artist, he knew his work quite well, and then... he was starving, he did not know how to make both ends meet and he used to lament. One day, a friend intending to help him, sent a picture-dealer to see him. When the merchant entered his studio, this poor man told himself, "At last! here's my chance", and he showed him all the best work he had done. The art-dealer made a face, looked around, turned over things and began rummaging in all the corners; and suddenly he found... Ah! I must explain this to you, you are not familiar with these things: a painter, after his day's work has at times some mixed colours left on his palette; he cannot keep them, they dry up in a day; so he always has with him some pieces of canvas which are not well prepared and which he daubs with what are called "the scrapings of palettes" (with supple knives he scrapes all the colours from the palette and applies them on the canvases) and as there are many mixed colours, this makes unexpected designs. There was in a corner a canvas like that on which he used to put his palette-scrapings. The merchant suddenly falls upon that and exclaims, "Here you are! my friend, you are a genius, this is a miracle, it is this you should show! Look at this richness of tones, this variety of forms, and what an imagination!" And this poor man who was starving said shyly, "But sir, these are my palette-scrapings!" And the art-dealer caught hold of him: "Silly fool, this is not to be told!" Then he said, "Give me this, I undertake to sell it. Give me as many of these as you like; ten,

twenty, thirty a month, I shall sell them all for you and I shall make you famous.” Then, as I told you, his stomach was protesting; he was not happy, but he said, “All right, take it, I shall see.” Then the landlord comes to demand his rent; the colour-man comes demanding payment of the old bill; the purse is quite empty, and what is to be done? So though he did not make pictures with palette-scrappings, he did something which gave the imagination free play, where the forms were not too precise, the colours were all mixed and brilliant, and one could not know overmuch what one was seeing; and as people did not know very much what they saw, those who understood nothing about it exclaimed, “How beautiful it is!” And he supplied this to his art-dealer. He never made a name for himself with his real painting, which was truly very fine (it was really very fine, he was a very good painter), but he won a world reputation with these horrors! And this was just at the beginning of modern painting, this goes back to the Universal Exhibition of 1900; if I were to tell you his name, you would all recognise it.... Now, of course, they have gone far beyond, they have done much better. However, he had the sense of harmony and beauty and his colours were beautiful. But at present, as soon as there is the least beauty, it won’t do at all, it has to be outrageously ugly, then that, that is modern!

The story began with... the man who used to do still-life and whose plates were never round... Cézanne! It was he who began it; he said that if plates were painted round that would not be living; that when one looks at things spontaneously, never does one see plates round: one sees them like this (*gesture*). I don’t know why, but he said that it is only the mind that makes us see

plates as round, because one knows they are round, otherwise one does not see them round. It is he who began... He painted a still-life which was truly a very beautiful thing, note that; a very beautiful thing, with an impression of colour and form truly surprising (I could show you reproductions one day, I must be having them, but they are not colour reproductions unfortunately: the beauty is really in the colour). But, of course, his plate was not round. He had friends who told him just this, "But after all, why don't you make your plate round?" He replied, "My dear fellow, you are altogether mental, you are not an artist, it is because you think that you make your plates round: if you only see, you will do it like this" (*gesture*). It is in accordance with the impression that the plate ought to be painted; it gives you an impact, you translate the impact, and it is this which is truly artistic. It is like this that modern art began. And note that he was right. His plates were not round, but he was right in principle.

What has made art what it is, do you want me to tell you this, psychologically?... it is photography. Photographers did not know their job and gave you hideous things, frightfully ugly, it was mechanical, it had no soul, it had no art, it was horrible. All the first attempts of photography until... not very long ago, were like that. It is about fifty years ago that it became tolerable, and now with gradual improvement it has become something good: but it must be said that the process is absolutely different. In those days, when your portrait was taken, you sat in a comfortable chair, you had to sit leaning nicely and facing an enormous thing with a black cloth, which opened like this towards you. And the man ordered, "Don't move! Steady!" That, of course, was the end of the old

painting. When the painter made something life-like, a life-like portrait, his friends said, “Why now, this is photography!”

It must be said that the art of the end of the last century, the art of the Second Empire, was bad. It was an age of businessmen, above all an age of bankers, financiers, and taste, upon my word, had gone very low. I don’t believe that businessmen are people necessarily very competent in art, but when they wanted their portrait, they wanted a likeness! One could not leave out the least detail, it was quite comic: “But you know I have a little wrinkle there, don’t forget to put it in!” and the lady who said, “You know, you must make my shoulders quite round”, and so on. So the artists made portraits which indeed turned into photography. They were flat, cold, without soul and without vision. I can name a number of artists of that period, it was truly a shame for art. This lasted till about the end of the last century, till about 1875. Afterwards, there started the reaction. Then there was an entire very beautiful period — I don’t say this because I myself was painting, but all the artists I then knew were truly artists, they were serious and did admirable things which have remained admirable. It was the period of the impressionists; it was the period of Manet, it was a beautiful period, they did beautiful things. But people tire of beautiful things as they tire of bad ones. So there were those who wanted to found the “Salon d’Automne”. They wanted to surpass the others, go more towards the new, towards the truly anti-photographic. And my goodness, they went a little beyond the limit (according to my taste). They began to depreciate Rembrandt — Rembrandt was a dauber, Titian was a dauber, all the great painters of the Italian Renaissance were daubers. You were not to

pronounce the name of Raphael, it was a shame. And all the great period of the Italian Renaissance was “not worth very much”; even the works of Leonardo da Vinci: “You know, you must take them with a pinch of salt.” Then they went a little further; they wanted something entirely new, they became extravagant. And then, from there, there was only one more step to take for the palette-scrapings and then it was finished.

This is the history of art as I knew it.

Now, to tell you the truth, we are climbing up the curve again.

9 April 1951

Rodin, His Wife and His Model

I knew all the greatest artists of the last century or the beginning of this century, and they truly had a sense of beauty, but morally, some of them were very crude. When the artist was seen at his work, he lived in a magnificent beauty but when you saw the gentleman at home, he had only a very limited contact with the artist in himself and usually he became someone very vulgar, very ordinary. Many of them were, I am sure of it. But those who were unified, in the sense that they truly lived their art — those, no; they were generous and good.

I remember a very amusing story that Rodin told me. You know Rodin — not the man but what he has done? Rodin put a question to me one day; he asked me, “How can one prevent two women from being jealous of each other?” (*laughter*) I said to him, “Ah, here’s a problem indeed! But won’t you please tell me why?” Then he told me, “It’s like this: most of my work I do in clay, at least much of it, before sculpting it in stone or casting it in bronze. And so this is what happens: at times I go away for a day or two or more. I leave my clay models covered with wet cloth because if it dries up it cracks and all the work is lost, I have to do it over again.” All sculptors know this. And this is what happened to that poor man: he had a wife, and he had his favourite model who was quite... very intimate in the house, she came in when she liked — she was the model he used for his sculptures. Now, the wife wanted to be the wife. And when Rodin was absent, she came early every morning to the studio and sprinkled water on all the cloths, all the heads or bodies, everything. It was all covered up,

wrapped in wet cloth. Water is sprinkled upon it as on plants. So she came and sprayed them. And then, after a while, two or three hours later, there came the model who had the key to the studio. She opened the studio and she sprayed them. She saw very well that it was all wet, but she had the privilege of looking after the sculpture of her sculptor — and so she sprayed it. “And so,” said Rodin to me, “the result is that when I return from my travel, all my sculpture is melting and nothing of what I had done is any longer there!”

He was an old man, already old at that time. He was magnificent. He had a faun’s head, like a Greek faun. He was short, quite thick-set, solid; he had shrewd eyes. He was remarkably ironical and a little... He laughed at it, but still he would have preferred to find his sculpture intact!

And what was your reply? (laughter)

I don’t remember now... Perhaps I answered by a joke. No, I remember one thing, I asked him, “But why don’t you say: this one will sprinkle the water?” He then pulled at the little hair that was left on his head and said, “But that would be a fight with knives.” (*Laughter*)

Voilà, good night.

17 March 1954

Contrasts

What most men call “artistry” is just contrast. Artists say and feel that it is the shadows which make the light, that if there were no contrasts, they would not be able to make a picture. It is the same thing with music: the contrast between “forte” and “piano” is one of the greatest charms of music.

I knew some poets who used to say, “It is my enemies’ hatred which makes me value the affection of my friends...” And it is the almost inevitable likelihood of misfortune which gives all its savour to happiness, and so on. And they value repose only in contrast with the daily agitation, silence only because of the usual noise, and some of them even tell you, “Oh! it is because there are illnesses that good health is cherished.” It goes so far that a thing is valued only when it is lost. And as Sri Aurobindo says here¹: When this fever of action, of movement, this agitation of creative thought is not there, one feels one is falling into inertia. Most people fear silence, calm, quietude. They no longer feel alive when they are not agitated.

I have seen many cases in which Sri Aurobindo had given silence to somebody, had made his mind silent, and that person came back to him in a kind of despair, saying: “But I have become stupid!” For his mind was no longer restless.

What he says here is terribly true. Men want freedom but they are in love with their chains, and when one wants to take them

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, Cent. Ed., Vol. 16, p. 385.

away, when one wants to show them the path of true liberation, they are afraid, and often they even protest.

Almost all of man's works of art — literary, poetic, artistic — are based on the violence of contrasts in life. When one tries to pull them out of their daily dramas, they really feel that it is not artistic. If they wanted to write a book or compose a play where there would be no contrasts, where there would be no shadows in the picture, it would probably be something seemingly very dull, very monotonous, lifeless, for what man calls "life" is the drama of life, the anxiety of life, the violence of contrasts. And perhaps if there were no death, they would be terribly tired of living.

30 January 1957

Insensibility to Other's Needs

The material world, just as it is, is very awkward at expressing the truth behind things. That is obvious. I believe we don't need to reflect very deeply to perceive that, unless there are people... Yes, in "The Four Austerities" I speak of those who are perfectly adjusted in life and find everything wonderful, but I haven't yet met many of these who can believe it all their life. I am speaking of optimists — one is optimistic so long as one is healthy and very young, and then, as soon as one begins to be less strong and less healthy, optimism vanishes. But still, if one has a little sense and sensibility, it is easy to see that everything is not for the best in the best possible world, for if you yourself are comfortable and have all you need, if you are getting on well and have no cares, that does not mean that there are not millions of beings in altogether painful and sad situations. Then, it may be very easy to think only of oneself. But it is not something very advisable. I knew people who were very rich and had never had the chance to come into contact with those who had nothing or hadn't enough, and for them it was something unthinkable. I knew a lady (I knew many) who lived in a very fine apartment with many servants and all possible comfort — she had always lived thus and had never known any but easy circumstances — and one day I spoke to her about someone, a person of great worth and merit but who had nothing, hadn't enough to eat — and I asked her to help that person, not with money for he would not have accepted it, but with some work or by inviting him to pass some time with her (for he had a philosophical mind and could have helped her intellectually). So I

told her: “You know, he doesn’t always eat his fill.” I saw that she did not understand. I said, “Well, yes, he does not always have enough money to buy food — buy bread and the food he needs.” — “But surely there is always bread and food in the kitchen!” (*Laughter*) She said that so spontaneously!

17 February 1954

Knowledge by Identification

One must *become* that which one wants to know. One may surmise, imagine, deduce, one may reason, but one does not know.

So it is something difficult for human beings?

No, why?

One can learn how to identify oneself. One must learn. It is indispensable if one wants to get out of one's ego. For so long as one is shut up in one's ego, one can't make any progress.

How can it be done?

There are many processes. I'll tell you one.

When I was in Paris, I used to go to many places where there were gatherings of all kinds, people making all sorts of researches, spiritual (so-called spiritual), occult researches, etc. And once I was invited to meet a young lady (I believe she was Swedish) who had found a process of knowledge, exactly a process for learning. And so she explained it to us. We were three or four (her French was not very good but she was full of conviction!); she said: "It's like this, you take an object or make a sign on a blackboard or take a drawing — that is not important — take whatever is most convenient for you. Suppose, for instance, that I draw for you... (she had a blackboard) I draw a design." She drew a kind of half-geometric design. "Now, you sit in front of the design and concentrate all your attention upon it — upon that design which is

there. You concentrate, concentrate without letting anything else enter your consciousness — except that. Your eyes are fixed on the drawing and don't move at all. You are as it were hypnotised by the drawing. You look (and so she sat there, looking), you look, look, look... I don't know, it takes more or less time, but still for one who is used to it, it goes pretty fast. You look, look, look, you become that drawing you are looking at. Nothing else exists in the world any longer except the drawing, and then, suddenly, you pass to the other side; and when you pass to the other side you enter a new consciousness, and you know.”

We had a good laugh, for it was amusing. But it is quite true, it is an excellent method to practise. Naturally, instead of taking a drawing or any object, you may take, for instance, an ideal, a few words. You have a problem preoccupying you, you don't know the solution of the problem; well, you objectify your problem in your mind, put it in the most precise, exact, succinct terms possible, and then concentrate, make an effort; you concentrate only on the words, and if possible on the idea they represent, that is, upon your problem — you concentrate, concentrate, concentrate until nothing else exists but that. And it is true that, all of a sudden, you have the feeling of something opening, and one is on the other side. The other side of what?... It means that you have opened a door of your consciousness, and instantaneously you have the solution of your problem.

It is an excellent method of learning “how” to identify oneself....

There are, in Paris, theatres of the third or fourth rank where sensational dramas are performed. These are suburban theatres.

They are not for intellectuals but for the masses, and all the elements are always extremely dramatic, moving. Well, those who go there are mostly very simple people and forget completely that they are in a theatre. They identify themselves with the drama. And so, things like this happen: on the stage there is the traitor hiding behind the door, and the hero comes along, not aware naturally that the traitor is hiding there and he is going to be killed. Now, there are people sitting up there (in what is called the gallery), right up in the theatre, who shout: "Look out, he is there!" (laughter) It has not happened just once, it happens hundreds of times, spontaneously. I had seen a play of this kind called *Le Bossu*, I believe; anyway it was quite a sensational drama and it was being played at the *Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin*. In this play there was a room. On the stage a large room could be seen and at its side a small room and... I don't remember the story now, but in the small room there was a button which could be pressed, and by pressing the button the ceiling of the bigger room could be brought down on those who were there so as to crush them inexorably!... And we knew about it, people had already spoken about it, passed on the word. And now there was a traitor who had hidden himself in the little room and he knew the trick of the button, and then there was the hero who came in with other people, and they started arguing; and everyone knew that the ceiling was going to come down... I didn't say anything, I remembered I was in the theatre, I was waiting to see how the author was going to find a way to save his hero (for it was evident he couldn't kill him off like that before everybody!). But the others were not at all in

the same state. Well, there were spectators who shouted, really shouted: “Look out, mind the ceiling!” That’s how it was.

These are phenomena of self-identification. Only, they are involuntary. And this is also one of the methods used today to cure nervous diseases. When someone cannot sleep, cannot be restful because he is too excited and nervous and his nerves are ill and weakened by excessive agitation, he is told to sit in front of an aquarium, for instance — an aquarium, that’s very lovely, isn’t it? — before an aquarium with pretty little fish in it, gold-fish; just to sit there, settle down in an easy-chair and try not to think of anything (particularly not of his troubles) and look at the fish. So he looks at the fish, moving around, coming and going, swimming, gliding, turning, meeting, crossing, chasing one another indefinitely, and also the water flowing slowly and the passing fish. After a while he lives the life of fishes: he comes and goes, swims, glides, plays. And at the end of the hour his nerves are in a perfect state and he is completely restful!

12 August 1953

Mother Discovers the Gita

I said that between the age of eighteen and twenty I had attained a conscious and constant union with the divine Presence and that I had done it all alone, with absolutely nobody to help me, not even books, you understand? When I found one — there came to my hands a little later Vivekananda's Raja Yoga — it seemed to me so wonderful a thing, you see, that someone could explain something to me. This made me gain in a few months what would have perhaps taken me years to do.

I met a man. I was perhaps twenty-one then, I think, either twenty or twenty-one. I met a man who was an Indian, who came from here, and he spoke to me about the Gita. There was a translation, which, by the way, was quite bad, and he advised me to read it and gave me the key — his key, it was his key. He told me: "Read the Gita, this translation of the Gita which is not up to much, but still that's the only one in French." At that time I wouldn't have been able to understand anything in any other language. Besides, the English translations were as bad and I did not have... Sri Aurobindo had not yet written his.

He said, "Read the Gita, and take Krishna as the symbol of the immanent God, the inner Godhead." This was all that he told me. He said to me, "Read it with that — the knowledge that Krishna represents the immanent God in the Gita, the God who is within you." Well, in one month the whole work was done!

Now you, just see, you have been here since your very childhood, some of you, everything has been explained to you, the



Mother at the age of nineteen



Mother in 1906

whole work has almost been chewed up for you, you have been — not only with words but with psychic aids, with all kinds of... in all possible ways — you have been put on the path to this inner discovery, and still you let yourselves live, like that... (*gesture*) it will come when it comes... if you think about it at all!

There, then. But this does not at all discourage me. Why, I find it... quite amusing.

25 August 1954

The Joy in Overcoming a Desire

The Buddha has said that there is a greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it. It is an experience everybody can have and one that is truly very interesting, very interesting.

There was someone who was invited — it happened in Paris — invited to a *première* (a *première* means a first performance) of an opera of Massenet's. I think... I don't remember now whose it was. The subject was fine, the play was fine, and the music not displeasing; it was the first time and this person was invited to the box of the Minister of Fine Arts who always has a box for all the *première* at the government theatres. This Minister of Fine Arts was a simple person, an old countryside man, who had not lived much in Paris, who was quite new in his ministry and took a truly childlike joy in seeing new things. Yet he was a polite man and as he had invited a lady he gave her the front seat and himself sat at the back. But he felt very unhappy because he could not see everything. He leaned forward like this, trying to see something without showing it too much. Now, the lady who was in front noticed this. She too was very interested and was finding it very fine, and it was not that she did not like it, she liked it very much and was enjoying the show; but she saw how very unhappy that poor minister looked, not being able to see. So quite casually, you see, she pushed back her chair, went back a little as though she was thinking of something else, and drew back so well that he came forward and could now see the whole scene. Well, this person, when she drew back and gave up all desire to see the show, was filled with a sense of inner joy, a liberation from all

attachment to things and a kind of peace, content to have done something for somebody instead of having satisfied herself, to the extent that the evening brought her infinitely greater pleasure than if she had listened to the opera. This is a true experience, it is not a little story read in a book, and it was precisely at the time this person was studying Buddhist discipline, and it was in conformity with the saying of the Buddha that she tried this experiment.

9 February 1955

The Clergyman

The first time I came to India I came on a Japanese boat. And on this Japanese boat there were two clergymen, that is, Protestant priests, of different sects. I don't remember exactly which sects, but they were both English; I think one was an Anglican and the other a Presbyterian.

Now, Sunday came. There had to be a religious ceremony on the boat, or else we would have looked like heathens, like the Japanese! There had to be a ceremony, but who should perform it? Should it be the Anglican or should it be the Presbyterian? They just missed quarrelling. Finally, one of them withdrew with dignity — I don't remember now which one, I think it was the Anglican — and the Presbyterian performed his ceremony.

It took place in the lounge of the ship. We had to go down a few steps to this lounge. And that day, all the men had put on their jackets — it was hot, I think we were in the Red Sea — they put on their jackets, stiff collars, leather shoes; neckties well set, hats on their heads, and they went with a book under their arm, almost in a procession from the deck to the lounge. The ladies wore their hats, some carried even a parasol, and they too had their book under the arm, a prayer-book.

And so they all crowded down into the lounge, and the Presbyterian made a speech, that is to say, preached his sermon, and everybody listened very religiously. And then, when it was over, they all came up again with the satisfied air of someone who has done his duty. And, of course, five minutes later they were in

the bar drinking and playing cards, and their religious ceremony was forgotten. They had done their duty, it was over, there was nothing more to be said about it.

And the clergyman came and asked me, more or less politely, why I had not attended. I told him, “Sir, I am sorry, but I don’t believe in religion.”

“Oh! oh! you are a materialist?”

“No, not at all.”

“Ah! then why?”

“Oh!” I said, “if I were to tell you, you would be quite displeased, perhaps it is better for me not to say anything.”

But he insisted so much that at last I said, “You see, I don’t feel that you are sincere, neither you nor your flock. You all went there to fulfil a social duty and a social custom, but not at all because you really wanted to enter into communion with God.”

“Enter into communion with God! But we can’t do that! All that we can do is to say some good words, but we have no capacity to enter into communion with God.”

Then I said, “But it was just because of that I didn’t go, for it doesn’t interest me.”

After that he asked me many questions and admitted to me that he was going to China to convert the “heathens”. At that I became serious and told him, “Listen, even before your religion was born — not even two thousand years ago — the Chinese had a very high philosophy and knew a path leading them to the Divine; and when they think of Westerners, they think of them as barbarians. And so you are going there to convert those who know

more than you? What are you going to teach them? To be insincere, to perform hollow ceremonies instead of following a profound philosophy and a detachment from life which lead them to a more spiritual consciousness?... I don't think it's a very good thing you are going to do."

Then he felt so suffocated, the poor man; he said to me, "Eh, I fear I can't be convinced by your words!"

"Oh!" I said, "I am not trying to convince you, I only described the situation to you, and how I don't quite see why barbarians should want to go and teach civilised people what they have known long before you. That's all."

And there, that was the end of it.

23 May 1956

Philanthropy

“I am something.” That’s what I call ambition.

If these very people who are ready to give money for schools are told that there is a divine Work to be done, that the Divine has decided to do it in this particular way, even if they are convinced that it is indeed the Divine’s Work, they refuse to give anything, for this is not a recognised form of beneficence — one doesn’t have the satisfaction of having done something good! This is what I call ambition. I had instances of people who could give lakhs of rupees to open a hospital, for that gives them the satisfaction of doing something great, noble, generous. They glorify themselves, that’s what I call ambition.

I knew a humorist who used to say: “It won’t be so soon that the kingdom of God will come, for those poor philanthropists — what would remain for them? If humanity suffered no longer, the philanthropists would be without work.” It is difficult to come out of that. However, it is a fact that never will the world come out of the state in which it is unless it gives itself up to the Divine. All the virtues, however you glorify them, increase your self-satisfaction, that is, your ego; they do not help you truly to become aware of the Divine. It is the generous and wise people of this world who are the most difficult to convert. They are very satisfied with their life. A poor fellow who has done all sorts of stupid things all his life feels immediately sorry and says: “I am nothing, can do nothing. Make of me what You want.” Such a one is more

right and much closer to the Divine than one who is wise and full of his wisdom and vanity. He sees himself as he is.

The generous and wise man who has done much for humanity is too self-satisfied to have the least idea of changing. It is usually these people who say: “If indeed I had created the world, I wouldn’t have made it like this, I would have created it much better than that”, and they try to set right what the Divine has done badly! According to their picture, all this is stupid and useless.... It is not with that attitude that you can belong to the Divine. There will always be between you and Him the conscious ego of one’s own intellectual superiority which judges the Divine and is sure of never being mistaken. For they are convinced that if they had made the world, they would not have committed all the stupidities that God has perpetrated. And all this comes from pride, vanity, self-conceit; and there is exactly the seed of that in people who want to serve humanity.

What are they going to give to humanity? Nothing at all! Even if they gave every drop of their blood, all the ideas in their head, all the money in their pocket, that could not change one individual, who is but a second of time in eternity. They believe they can serve eternity? There are even beings higher than man who have come, have brought the light, given their life, and that has not changed things much. So how can a little man, a microscopic being, truly help? It is pride. The argument given is: “If everyone did his best, all would go well.” I don’t think so and, even, it is impossible. In a certain way, each thing in the universe does its best. But that best doesn’t come to anything at all. Unless everything changes, nothing will change. It is this best that must change. In the place

of ignorance must be born knowledge and power and consciousness, otherwise we shall always turn in a circle around the same stupidity.

You may open millions of hospitals, that will not prevent people from getting ill. On the contrary, they will have every facility and encouragement to fall ill. We are steeped in ideas of this kind. This puts your conscience at rest: “I have come to the world, I must help others.” One tells oneself: “How disinterested I am! I am going to help humanity.” All this is nothing but egoism.

In fact, the first human being that concerns you is yourself. You want to diminish suffering, but unless you can change the capacity of suffering into a certitude of being happy, the world will not change. It will always be the same, we turn in a circle — one civilisation follows another, one catastrophe another; but the thing does not change, for there is something missing, something not there, that is the consciousness. That’s all.

At least, that’s my opinion. I am giving it to you for what it is worth. If you want to build hospitals, schools, you may do so; if that makes you happy, so much the better for you. It has not much importance. When I saw the film *Monsieur Vincent*, I was very interested. He found out that when he fed ten poor men, a thousand came along. That was what Colbert told him: “It seems you create them, your poor ones, by feeding them!” And it is not altogether false. However! If it is your destiny to found schools and give instruction, to care for the sick, to open hospitals, it is good, do it. But you must not take that very seriously. It is something grandiose you are doing for your own pleasure. Say: “I am doing it because it gives me pleasure.” But do not speak of yoga. It is not

yoga you are doing. You believe you are doing something great, that's all, and it is for your personal satisfaction.

8 April 1953

Human Unity!

“Why is there such a diversity in the world, why all this multiplicity, why all this confusion, why...?” It is a confusion simply because you don’t understand and things are not in their place. If things were in their place, there would be no confusion. And we come to this, that you cannot take away one atom from this world without dislocating the universe. All that is, was necessary — if it had not been necessary, it would not have been. The whole totality of things is indispensable for realising the Divine. If you took away one of these things, there would be a hole in the realisation. And I am not speaking only of material things, material points, I am speaking of all the depths. So when you say as many do, “Ah! if that were not there in the world, how fine the world would be”, you are displaying your ignorance.

I met in Japan one of the sons of Tolstoy; he was going round the world preaching human unity. He had caught this from his father and was going everywhere in the world preaching human unity. I met him at some friends’ place and asked him, “How are you going to realise this human unity?” Do you know what reply he gave me? “Oh! it is very simple — if everybody spoke the same language, if everybody dressed in the same way, if everybody lived in the same fashion, the whole world would be united!” Then I told him, “That would be a poor world not worth living in.” He did not understand me!

5 April 1951

Raining Stones

There was a time we were living in the Guest House.¹ Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor, in the room right at the end which is now the meditation-room of the children's boarding. I believe there are two rooms side by side, one used to be a bathroom but is now an ordinary room, and a room next to it which was mine — the bathroom and another room. Sri Aurobindo was on one side.

How many of us were there in that house?... Amrita was there (*turning to the disciple*), weren't you, Amrita, do you remember that day? (*Laughter*) We had a cook called Vatel. This cook was rather bad-tempered and didn't like being reproved about his work. Moreover, he was in contact with some Musulmans who had it seems, magical powers — they had a book of magic and the ability to practise magic. One day, this cook had done something very bad and had been scolded — I don't know if any of you knew Datta, it was Datta who had scolded him — and he was furious. He had threatened us, saying, "You will see, you will be compelled to leave this house." We had taken no notice of it.

Two or three days later, I think, someone came and told me that stones had fallen in the courtyard — a few stones, three or four: bits of brick. We wondered who was throwing stones from the next house. We did exactly what we forbid children to do: we

¹ Sri Aurobindo lived in the Guest House (41 rue François Martin) between 1913 and September 1922. The incident related by the Mother here occurred in 1921, sometime in the middle of December.

went round on the walls and roofs to see if we could find someone or the stones or something — we found nothing.

That happened, I believe, between four and five in the afternoon. As the day declined, the number of stones increased. The next day, there were still more. They started striking specially the door of the kitchen and one of them struck Datta's arm as she was going across the courtyard. The number increased very much. The interest was growing. And as the interest grew, it produced a kind of effect of multiplication! And the stones began falling in several directions at the same time, in places where there were neither doors nor windows; there was a staircase, but it had no opening in those days: there was only a small bull's-eye. And the stones were falling on the staircase this way (*vertical gesture*); if they had come through the bull's-eye, they would have come like this (*slantwise movement*), but they were falling straight down. So, I think everyone started to be truly interested. I must tell you that this Vatel had informed us that he was ill and for the last two days — since the stones had started falling — he hadn't come. But he had left with us his under-cook, a young boy of about thirteen or fourteen, quite fat, somewhat lifeless and a little quiet, perhaps a little stupid. And we noticed that when this boy moved around, wherever he went the stones increased. The young men who were there — Amrita among them — shut the boy up in a room, with all the doors and windows closed; they started making experiments like the spiritists (*laughing*): "Close all the doors, close all the windows." And there was the boy sitting there inside and the stones began falling, with all the doors and windows

closed! And more and more fell, and finally the boy was wounded in the leg. Then they started feeling the thing was going too far.

I was with Sri Aurobindo: quietly we were working, meditating together. The boys cast a furtive glance to see what was going on and began warning us, for it was perhaps time to tell us that the thing was taking pretty serious proportions. I understood immediately what the matter was.

I must tell you that we had made an attempt earlier to exhaust all possibilities of an ordinary, physical explanation. We had called in the police, informed them that there was somebody throwing stones at us, and they wanted very much to come and see what was happening. So a policeman — who was a fine good fellow — immediately told us, “Oh! you have Vatel as your cook. Yes, yes, we know what it is!” He had a loaded pistol and stood waiting there in the courtyard — not a stone! I was on the terrace with Sri Aurobindo; I said to Sri Aurobindo, “That’s a bit too bad, we call the police and just then the stones stop falling! But that is very annoying, in this way he will think we haven’t told the truth, for no stones are falling.” Instantaneously the stones began falling again. (*Laughter*)

You should note that the stones were falling quite a long way off from the terrace and not one of them came anywhere near us.

So the policeman said, “It’s not worthwhile, my staying here, I know what it is, it is Vatel who has done this against you, I am going.”

It was after this that we made the experiment of shutting up the boy, and the stones began to fall in the closed room and I was

informed that the boy had been wounded. Then I said, "All right, send the boy out of the house immediately. Send him to another house, anywhere, and let him be looked after, but don't keep him here, and then, that's all. Keep quiet and don't be afraid." I was in the room with Sri Aurobindo and I thought, "We'll see what it is." I went into meditation and gave a little call. I said, "Let us see, who is throwing stones at us now? You must come and tell us who is throwing stones."... I saw three little entities of the vital, those small entities which have no strength and just enough consciousness confined to one action — it is nothing at all; but these entities are at the service of people who practise magic. When people practise magic, they order them to come and they are compelled to obey. There are signs, there are words. So, they came, they were frightened — they were terribly frightened! I said, "But why do you fling stones like that! What does it mean, this bad joke?" They replied, "We are compelled, we are compelled... (*laughter*) It is not our fault, we have been ordered to do it, it is not our fault."

I really felt so much like laughing but still I kept a serious face and told them, "Well, you must stop this, you understand!" Then they told me, "Don't you want to keep us? We shall do all that you ask." "Ah!" I thought, "let us see, this is perhaps going to be interesting." I said to them, "But what can you do?" — "We know how to throw stones." (*laughter*) — "That doesn't interest me at all, I don't want to throw stones at anyone... but could you perchance bring me flowers? Can you bring me some roses?" Then they looked at one another in great dismay and answered, "No, we are not made for that, we don't know how to do it." I said,

“I don’t need you, go away, and take care specially never to come back, for otherwise it will be disastrous!” They ran away and never came back.

There was one thing I had noticed: it was only at the level of the roof that the stones were seen — from the roof downwards, we saw the stones; just till the roof, above it there were no stones. This meant that it was like an automatic formation. In the air nothing could be seen; they materialised in the atmosphere of the house and fell.

And to complete the movement, the next morning — all this happened in the evening — the next morning I came down to pay a visit to the kitchen — there were pillars in the kitchen — and upon one of the pillars I found some signs with numbers as though made with a bit of charcoal, very roughly drawn — I don’t remember the signs now — and also words in Tamil. Then I rubbed out everything carefully and made an invocation, and so it was finished, the comedy was over.

However, not quite. Vatel’s daughter was *ayah* in the house, the maid-servant. She came early in the afternoon in a state of intense fright saying, “My father is in the hospital, he is dying; this morning something happened to him; suddenly he felt very ill and he is dying, he has been taken to the hospital, I am terribly frightened.” I knew what it was. I went to Sri Aurobindo and said to him, “You know, Vatel is in the hospital, he is dying.” Then Sri Aurobindo looked at me, he smiled: “Oh, just for a few stones!” (*Laughter*)

That very evening Vatel was cured. But he never started anything again.



A Friday class in the Guest House courtyard at the Playground



Mother telling a story to Green Group children in the ping pong room at the Guest House, on a rainy day



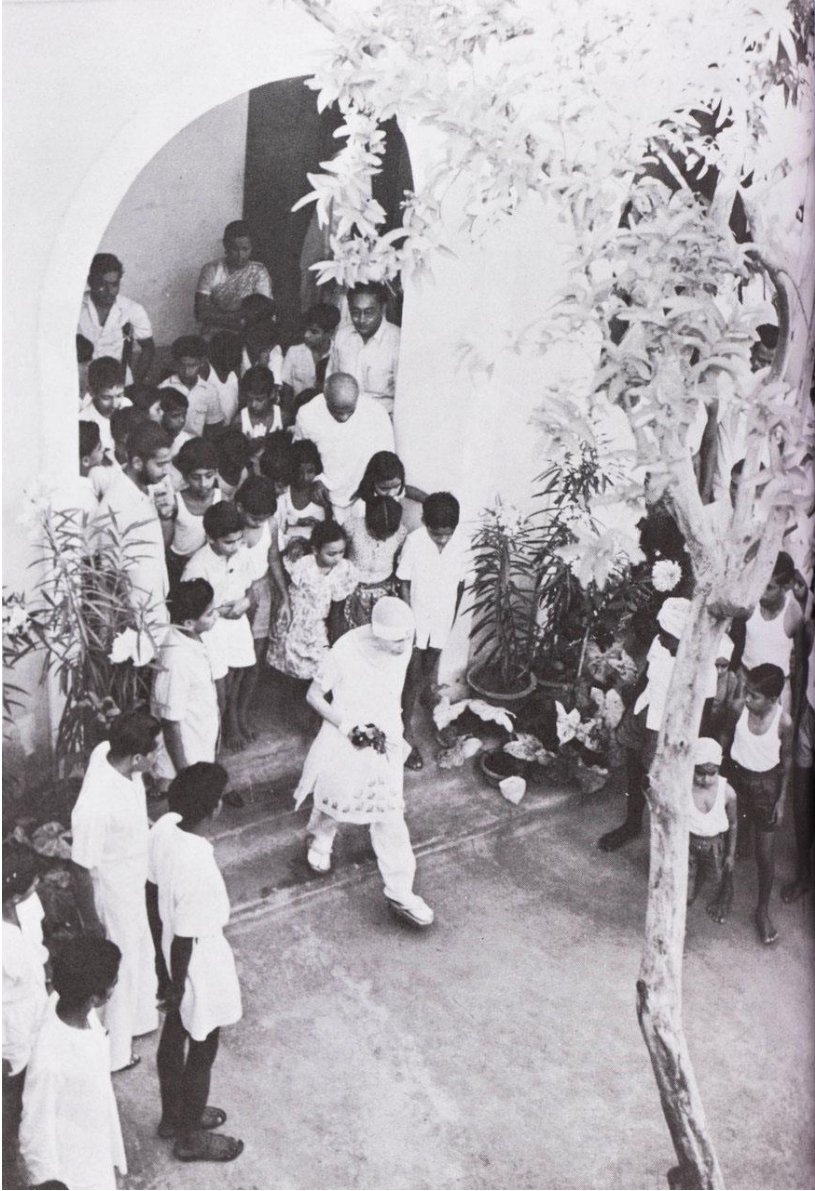
Recitation class in the Guest House courtyard in March 1953



Mother with children at the Sports Ground



Mother at the Playground in front of the spiritual map of India



Mother in the school

How could the stones be seen?

That's what is remarkable. There are beings that have the power of dematerialising and rematerialising objects. These were quite ordinary pieces of bricks, but these pieces materialised only in the field where the magic acted. The magic was practised for this house, especially for its courtyard, and the action of vital forces worked only there. That was why when I sent away the boy and he went to another house, not a single stone hit him any more. The magical formation was made specially for this house, and the stones materialised in the courtyard. And as it was something specially directed against Datta, she was hit on her arm.

There was yet something else.... Ah, yes! We came to know later to which magician Vatel had gone. He had gone to a magician who, it seems, is very well-known here and he had said that he wanted definitely to make us leave that house — I don't know why. He was furious. And so he asked the magician to make stones fall there. The magician told him, "But that's the house Sri Aurobindo lives in!" He said, "Yes." — "Ah! no, I am not going to meddle in this business; you manage it, I am not getting involved." Then Vatel insisted very much; he even promised him a greater reward, a little more money. The magician said, "Well, look here; we are going to make a rule: in a circle of twenty-five metres around Sri Aurobindo" — I think he said twenty or twenty-five metres — "the stones will not fall. Always there will have to be twenty-five metres' distance between the stones and Sri Aurobindo." And he arranged his order of magic in this way. And

that was why never did a single stone come anywhere near us, never. They fell at the other end of the courtyard.

They know how to do all that, it is written in their books. These are words and ceremonies having a certain power. Naturally, those who do that must have a vital force. A vital force is necessary — a little mental force also, not much, even very little — but quite a strong vital power to control these little entities, govern them. And these people rule them precisely through fear, for they have the power to dissolve them, so these entities fear this very much. But upon all these formations, all these entities, it is enough to put simply one drop of the true, pure light, the pure white light — the true, pure light which is the supreme light of construction — you put one drop upon them: they dissolve as though there had been nothing at all there. And yet this is not a force of destruction; it is a force of construction but it is so alien to their nature that they disappear. It is this they feared, for I had called them by showing them this white light; I had told them, “Look, here is this! Come.” But their offer was touching: “Oh! we shall do everything you want.” I said, “Good, what can you do?” — “Throw stones!” (*Laughter*)

10 March 1954

An Enormous Vital Spider

I saw that whatever concentrated force there was in the church depended exclusively upon the faithful, the faith of the devotees. And there was still a difference between the force as it really was and the force as they felt it. For instance, I saw in one of the most beautiful cathedrals of France, which, from the artistic point of view, is one of the most magnificent monuments imaginable — in the most sacred spot I saw an *enormous* black, vital spider which had made its web and spread it over the whole place, and was catching in it and then absorbing all the forces emanating from people's devotion, their prayers and all that. It was not a very cheering sight; the people who were there and were praying, felt a divine touch, they received all kinds of boons from their prayers, and yet what was there was this, this thing. But they had their faith which could change that evil thing into something good in them; they had their faith. So, truly, if I had gone and told them, "Do you think you are praying to God? It is an enormous vital spider that's feeding upon all your forces!", that would really not have been very charitable....

I am sorry, but that's how it is. I tell you I have deliberately tried this experiment a little everywhere. Maybe I found some very tiny places, like a tiny village church at times, where there was a very quiet little spot for meditation, very still, very silent, where there was some aspiration; but this was so rare! I have seen the beautiful churches of Italy, magnificent places; they were full of these vital beings and full of terror. I remember painting in a basilica of Venice, and while I was working, in the confessional a

priest was hearing the confession of a poor woman. Well, it was truly a frightful sight! I don't know what the priest was like, what his character was, he could not be seen — you know, don't you? that they are not seen, they are shut up in a box and receive the confession through a grille. There was such a dark and sucking power over him, and that poor woman was in such a state of fearful terror that it was truly painful to see it. And all these people believe this is something holy! But it is a web of the hostile vital forces which use all this to feed upon.

30 June 1954

Hitler and the “Lord of Falsehood”

You have said that these beings of the vital world are attracted by the spiritual life. Why?

They are attracted, but this does not mean that they have decided sincerely to follow the spiritual life. The chief characteristic of these beings is falsehood: their nature is made of deceit. They have a power for illusion; they can take the appearance of divine beings or higher beings, they can appear in a dazzling light, but truly sincere people are not deceived, they immediately feel something that warns them. But if one likes the marvellous, the unexpected, if one loves fantastic things, if one likes to live a romance, one is likely to be easily deceived.

Not long ago there was a historical instance, that of Hitler, who was in contact with a being whom he considered to be the Supreme: this being came and gave him advice, told him all that he had to do. Hitler used to retire into solitude and remain there as long as it was necessary to come into contact with his “guide” and receive from him inspirations which he carried out later very faithfully. This being which Hitler took for the Supreme was quite plainly an Asura, one who is called the “Lord of Falsehood” in occultism, but who proclaimed himself as the “Lord of the Nations”. He had a shining appearance, he could mislead anybody except one who really had occult knowledge and could see what was there behind the appearance. He would have deceived anybody, he was truly splendid. Generally he used to appear to Hitler wearing a silver cuirass and helmet; a kind of flame came

out of his head and there was an atmosphere of dazzling light around him, so dazzling that Hitler could hardly look at him. He used to tell Hitler everything that had to be done — he played with him as with a monkey or a mouse. He had decided clearly to make Hitler commit all possible extravagances till the day he would break his neck, which did happen. But cases like this are frequent, though on a smaller scale, of course.

Hitler was a very good medium, he had great mediumistic capacities, but he lacked intelligence and discrimination. This being could tell him anything whatever and he swallowed it all. It was he who pushed Hitler little by little. And he was doing this as a distraction, he did not take life seriously. For these beings men are very tiny things with whom they play, as a cat plays with a mouse, till finally they eat them up.

Are mentally deranged people possessed?

Yes, unless there is a physical lesion, a defect in the formation or an accident, a congestion. In all other cases it is always a possession. The proof of it is that if a person is brought to you who is altogether mentally deranged, if he has a lesion, he cannot be cured, while if there is no physical lesion, if it is a possession, then one can cure him. Unfortunately these things happen only to people who like them; there must be in the being much ambition, vanity, combined with much stupidity and a terrible pride — it is on such things that those beings play. I have known cases like that, of persons who were partially possessed, and I succeeded in freeing them from the beings who possessed them. Naturally they

felt some relief, a kind of ease for a time, but it did not last long; almost immediately it wore off and they thought: “Now I have become quite an ordinary creature, whereas before I was an exceptional being!” They used to feel within them an exceptional power, even if it was a power to do evil, and they were satisfied with it. So what did they do? They called back with all their force the power they had lost! Of course, the being that had been destroyed could not come back, but as these beings exist in thousands it was replaced by another. I have seen this happen three times consecutively in a case, so much so that in the end I had to tell the person: “I am tired, get rid of it yourself, I am no longer interested!”...

When Hitler died, did the Lord of Falsehood pass into Stalin?

It is not quite like that that things happen, but it is something similar. This being did not wait for Hitler’s death, it is there that you are mistaken. These beings are not at all tied to a single physical presence. The being in question could very well possess Hitler and at the same time influence many others. Hitler was got rid of because he had behind him a whole nation and a physical power, and if he had succeeded it would have been a disaster for humanity, but there was no deluding oneself about it; it was not sufficient to get rid of him in order to get rid of the force that was behind him — that is not so easy. I must tell you that the origin of these beings is prior to that of the gods; they are the first emanations, the first individual beings of the universe; so they cannot be got rid of so easily, by winning one war.

As long as they are necessary for the universal evolution they will exist. The day they lose their utility, they will be converted or will disappear.

Besides, they know that they are nearing their last hour and that is why they are doing as much damage as they can.

There were four of them. The first one has been converted, another is dissolved into its origin. Two are still living and these two are more ferocious than the others. One is known in occultism as the “Lord of Falsehood”, I have told you this, the other is the “Lord of Death”. And as long as these two beings exist, there will be difficulties.

8 March 1951

The Secret of Religions

It is very bad to learn just a little. One must learn more until one comes to the point where one sees that one knows nothing... I spoke to you about the novice who wants to pass on to others what he has learnt — until the day he sees he has not much to pass on. Usually all religious teaching is based on that. Very little knowledge, with precise formulas which are well written (often quite well written) and crystallise in the brain, and assert: “That is indeed the truth.” You have only to study what is there in the book. How easy it is! In every religion there is a book — whether it be the catechism, the Hindu texts, the Koran, in short, all the sacred books — you learn it by heart. You are told that this-is-the-truth, and you are sure it is the truth and remain comfortable. It is very convenient, you don’t need to try to understand. Those who don’t know the same thing as you, are in the falsehood, and you even pray for those who are outside the “Truth”! This is a common fact in all religions. But in all religions there are people who know better and don’t believe in these things. I had met one of these particularly, one belonging to the Catholic faith. He was a big man. I spoke to him about what I knew and asked him: “Why do you use this method? Why do you perpetuate ignorance?” He answered: “It is a policy of peace of mind. If we didn’t do that, people wouldn’t listen to us. This, indeed, is the secret of religions.” He told me: “There are in our religion, as in the ancient initiations, people who know. There are schools where the old tradition is taught. But we are forbidden to speak about it. All these

religious images are symbols representing something other than what is taught. But that is not taught outside.”

The reason for this is very generous and kind (according to them): “People who have a tiny brain — and there are plenty — if we tell them something that’s too high, too great, it troubles them, disturbs them, and they become unhappy. They will never be able to understand. Why worry them uselessly? They don’t have the capacity to find the truth. Whilst, if you tell them: ‘If you have faith in this, you will go to heaven’, they are quite happy.” There, you see. It is very convenient.

29 April 1953

“India Is Free” – Mother’s Vision

If I tell you: “What is happening to you had been decided in advance”, I could also say: “What is happening here, has already happened elsewhere”, that would be equally true, and equally false, because it is impossible to express this in words.

I am going to give you an example which perhaps will make you understand. I do not remember exactly when it happened; it must have been some time in the year 1920 probably (perhaps earlier, perhaps in 1914-1915, but I don’t think so, it was some time in the year 1920). One day — every day I used to meditate with Sri Aurobindo: he used to sit on one side of a table and I on the other, on the veranda — and one day in this way, in meditation, I entered (how to put it?...), I went up very high, entered very deep or came out of myself (well, whatever one may say does not express what happened, these are merely ways of speaking), I reached a place or a state of consciousness from which I told Sri Aurobindo just casually and quite simply: “India is free.” It was in 1920. Then he put to me a question: “How?” And I answered him: “Without any fight, without a battle, without a revolution. The English themselves will leave, for the condition of the world will be such that they won’t be able to do anything else except go away.”

It was *done*. I spoke in the future when he asked me the question, but there where I had seen, I said, India is free, it was a fact. Now, India was not free at that time: it was in 1920. Yet it was there, it had been done. And it happened in 1947. That is to

say, from the external physical point of view I saw it twenty-seven years in advance. But it had been done.

Could you see Pakistan?

No, for the freedom could have come about without Pakistan. Indeed, if they had listened to Sri Aurobindo there would have been no Pakistan.

Well, externally it seems to take time, but in fact it is like that.

Sweet Mother, how can one say that a fact is “already accomplished” when it has not yet been manifested — for instance, that the Divine has chosen an instrument, when nothing is yet apparent?

Yes, within, in the world which is not yet manifested, the decision is there, it is taken there; but then it must come to the surface.

It corresponds exactly to what I have already told you so often about the freedom of India. After going to a certain plane, I said to Sri Aurobindo, “India is free.” I didn’t say, “She *will* be free”; I said, “She *is* free.” Well, between that moment when it was an accomplished fact and the time when it was translated into the material world on earth, how many years were necessary? It was in 1915, and liberation came in 1947, that is, thirty-two years later. There you are, that is the exact picture of the resistance.

So, for the individual it is the same thing; sometimes it takes as long as that, sometimes it goes faster.

You say you saw India free...

No, I did not see: I knew.

You said to Sri Aurobindo: "India is free." Was India free as one whole or cut into two as it is at present?

I meant specially what happened in 1947, that is, the withdrawal of foreign domination, that's all. Nothing but that, not her moral or spiritual freedom, I did not speak of that at all. I simply said she was free from foreign domination, because, even to a question Sri Aurobindo put to me, I answered from the same plane, "There will be no violence, this will come about without a revolution, it will be the English who will decide to go away of their own accord, for things will become too hot for them owing to certain world circumstances." So that was the only point, there was no spiritual question here.

And that's how things happened. And I had told Sri Aurobindo this in 1915, exactly. It was all there, it was there — I guessed nothing nor prophesied anything: it was a fact.

And so, that gives you the exact picture of the length of time necessary between the established fact and the inner realisation. And for the individual it is the same thing: he is chosen, he has chosen; and he has chosen the Divine and he is chosen; and it is something which has been decided; and it will be realised inevitably, one can't escape even if one tries. Only, it may take a very long time.

Mother, I was asking... (laughter) You said that India was free in 1915, but was she free as she is free now? Because India is not free as one whole. She is broken up.

Oh! Oh! that's what you wanted to know.

That... the details were not there. No, there must have been a possibility of its being otherwise, for, when Sri Aurobindo told them to do a certain thing, sent them his message,¹ he knew very well that it was possible to avoid what happened later. If they had listened to him at that time, there would have been no division. Consequently, the division was not decreed, it was a human deformation. It is beyond question a human deformation.

But then, how can it be said that the decision of the Supreme cannot be eluded?

What?

If the Divine had chosen that India would be free...

No, no, it's not like that, my child! (*Laughter*)

It's a *fact*, that's all. It is the Divine who is India, it is the Divine who is freedom, it is the Divine who is subjection, it is the Divine who is everything — then how could He choose?

(*Silence*)

¹ In 1942, at the time of the proposals offered by the British through Sir Stafford Cripps, not yet granting independence to India but leading towards it, Sri Aurobindo took the trouble of sending a special messenger to Delhi to convince certain responsible persons that the proposals must be accepted. They did not understand. Had the proposals been accepted, the partition of India and its accompanying atrocities would most probably have been avoided.

I advise you to go up there and see, then you will understand.
So long as you have not climbed right up the ladder, it will be
difficult to understand.

18 January 1956

The Black Kali– “Paris Will Be Destroyed”

Close by here, near the seashore, there is a fishermen's temple — Virampatnam, I think; when you go as far as Ariancouppam and from there turn to the left and go towards the sea, at the end of the road there is a temple. It is the temple of a strange godhead... it is one of the Kalis. Well, extraordinary stories are told about this Kali, but in any case, the custom is to kill a fairly large number of chickens every year in her honour. I happened to go down there — I believe it was the day after the festival had been celebrated; one could still see all the feathers scattered on the sands — and, above all, there was in that place an atmosphere of creepy dread and total ignorance... there was that atmosphere of greed, not only greed but of gluttony, of people who think about eating. And there was that Kali who was particularly satisfied with all the vital forces of all those poor little chickens; they had been killed off by hundreds and each one had a little vital force which escaped when its throat was cut, and so that Kali was feeding upon all that: she was very happy. And there was evidently — I don't know if it could be called cruelty, it was rather greed, — greed of vital forces, of a very unconscious vital force, for these poor chickens don't have anything very conscious. And the whole thing created a very low, very heavy, very unconscious and painful atmosphere, yet not of the intensity of cruelty. So it can't be said that this practice is due to cruelty. I don't think so. Perhaps some of these people, had they to sacrifice a little kid, a little lamb they loved, perhaps they would even find this a little sad. It is rather a great

unconsciousness and a great fear. Oh, fear! In religions there is so much fear! Fear: “If I don’t do this or that, if I don’t cut the throat of a dozen chickens, disastrous things will happen to me all my life through or at least the whole of this year. My children will be ill, I shall lose my job, I won’t be able to earn my living; very, very unpleasant things will happen to me.”... And so, let us sacrifice the dozen chickens. But it is not from the desire to kill. It can’t be said that it’s through cruelty: it’s through unconsciousness.

What did that Kali do when you went to see her?

You know the story, don’t you?... I did not know the place, but there is a bit of a road between Ariancoupam and this temple. And so, half-way, I was seated quietly in my car knowing nothing — I knew nothing, neither the story of that Kali nor of the chickens nor anything — I was seated in my car when suddenly I saw a black being coming, with hair all dishevelled, who asked me to make a pact. And she assumed a tone of great supplication and told me, “Ah! if you wish, if you wish to adopt me and come to help me, how many people would come, how very glorious this place would become.” She was a funny little creature. She was black, dishevelled, quite thin, she didn’t seem to be flourishing much! Later I was told — I don’t know the story exactly, I can’t say — that some misfortune had befallen her: her head had been cut off... I told her to remain quiet and that I did not understand what she wanted of me, that I came... that if she had a sincere aspiration, well, there would be a response to her aspiration. The next moment we reached the temple; then I began to understand

that this was the person for whom the temple had been built. Later we went to walk on the seashore under the casuarina trees, and there we saw all the feathers and drops of blood and the remains of the fire — the fire on which, evidently, people had cooked their chickens. And we asked for the story. And I knew then the story of that Kali and how for that festival chickens were massacred in great numbers.

So, that's it. I don't suppose that creature felt any considerable satisfaction in seeing the chickens killed — I know nothing about it. As I said, all the profit she could get out of it was the absorption of some vital forces coming out of the chicken. But it was evident that she felt an enormous satisfaction in seeing a large crowd — the more people came there and the more chickens were killed, the greater was the sign of success. This proved that she had become a person of considerable importance! And so in her ingenuousness she came to ask my help, telling me that if I wanted to help her and give her something of my vital force and vital presence, there would be still more people and more chickens! Then that would be a very great success. I replied that as things stood it was quite enough, that she should remain quiet.

To what plane did she belong, Mother?

The most material vital.

Why is she called Kali?

I don't know. It is one of the Kalis — I have a vague impression that her head was cut off or that she was buried up to the neck or

I don't know what. Something like that. There is a story of a head which comes out of the sand, buried up to the neck. But that, anyone in this country will tell you the story, I don't remember it. It is a form of Kali — there are countless forms of Kali. Each believer has his image, has his particular relation with a certain Kali. Sometimes it is their own Kali: there are family Kalis — lots of family Kalis. I knew families who had very dangerous Kalis. If what they wanted was not done, always some misfortune befell the family members....

This Kali has no connection with Mahakali, has she?

No. She has a very close connection with the human mind. I believe these are almost exclusively constructions of the human mind... But I have found that there is really a Ganapati — something I didn't believe, I used to think it was a purely human formation, that story of the elephant head — but there is a being like that. I saw it, it is quite alive, and it is not a formation. So too there is a black Kali with her garland of skulls and her huge hanging tongue. I have seen her. I saw her entering my room with her eyes wide open. So I am sure she exists. And it was not a human formation: it was a being — a real being. Now, it is possible that some of the details may have been added by human thought. But still the being was a real being, it was not purely a formation.

What does that black Kali do?

Well, I believe she does fairly bad things! It is obvious that she takes a great pleasure in destruction.

That one — it was at the time of the First World War, the early days of the First War. I was here. I was staying in the house on Dupleix Street, Dupleix House. From the terrace of that house could be seen Sri Aurobindo's room, the one in the Guest House. Sri Aurobindo was staying there. He had two rooms and the small terrace. And from the terrace of Dupleix House the terrace of the Guest House could be seen. I don't know if it can still be seen; that depends on the houses in between, but at that time it could be. And I used to sit on the terrace to meditate every morning, facing Sri Aurobindo's room. That day I was in my room, but looking at Sri Aurobindo's room through a small window. I was in meditation but my eyes were open. I saw this Kali entering through my door; I asked her, "What do you want?" And she was dancing, a truly savage dance. She told me, "Paris is taken, Paris will be destroyed." We used to have no news, it was just at the beginning of the war. I was in meditation. I turned towards her and told her, "No, Paris will not be taken, Paris will be saved", quietly, just like this, but with a certain force. She made a face and went away. And the next day, we received the "dispatch". In those days there were no radios yet, we had telegraph messages, "dispatches", which were proclaimed, posted on the gate of the Government House. We got the news that the Germans had been marching upon Paris, that Paris was not defended; the way was quite open, they had to advance only a few kilometres more and they would have entered the city. But when they saw that the road was clear, that there was nobody to oppose them, they felt convinced that it was an ambush,

that a trap had been set for them. So they turned round and went back! (*Laughter*) And when the French armies saw that, naturally they gave chase and caught them, and there was a battle. It was the decisive battle: they were stopped. Well, evidently it was that. It took this form: When I said to Kali, “No”, they were panic-stricken. They turned back. Otherwise, if they had continued to advance it would have been all over.

What is Mahakali like?

Well, my children, when you see her, you can tell me! She is not like that Kali. All I can tell you is that she is not black, she doesn't stick out a big tongue, and she doesn't wear a necklace of human heads!

17 March 1954

A Serpent Keeps the Gates of the Treasure

It is often said in fairy tales that a treasure is guarded by serpents. Is this true?

Yes, but it is not a physical serpent, it is a vital serpent. The key to the treasures is in the vital world and it is guarded by an immense black serpent a tremendous serpent, ten times, fifty times larger than an ordinary one. It keeps the gates of the treasure. It is magnificent, black, always erect and awake. I happened once to be standing before it (usually these beings obey me when I give them an order), and I said to it, "Let me pass." It replied, "I would willingly let you pass, but if I do, they will kill me; so I cannot let you pass." I asked, "What must I bring you in order to gain entrance?" It said, "Oh, only one thing would oblige me to give way to you: if you could become master of the sex impulse in man, if you succeeded in conquering that in humanity, I could no longer resist, I would allow you to pass."

It has not yet allowed me to pass. I must admit that I have not fulfilled the condition, I have not been able to obtain such a mastery of it as to conquer it in all men.

That is quite difficult.

10 March 1951

The New Creation

I have been asked if we are doing a collective yoga and what the conditions for the collective yoga are.

I might tell you first of all that to do a collective yoga we must be a collectivity! and then speak to you about the different conditions required for being a collectivity. But last night (*smiling*) I had a symbolic vision of our collectivity.

I had this vision in the early part of the night, and it made me wake up with a rather unpleasant impression. Then I went back to sleep and had forgotten it, and just now when I thought of the question I have been asked, the vision suddenly came back. It returned with a great intensity....

Its symbol was very clear though of quite a familiar kind, so to speak, but so unmistakably realistic in its familiarity.... If I were to relate it to you in detail, probably you wouldn't even be able to follow; it was very complicated. It was the image of a kind of — how to put it? — of an immense hotel in which all earthly possibilities were accommodated in different rooms. And all this was in a state of constant transformation: fragments or entire wings of the building were suddenly demolished and rebuilt while all the people were still staying in them, in such a way that if a person went somewhere even inside this huge hotel, he ran the risk of not finding his room again when he wanted to get back to it! For it had been demolished and was being rebuilt on another plane. There was order, organisation... and there was the fantastic chaos I have described, and in that there was a symbol. There was a

symbol which certainly applies to what Sri Aurobindo writes here¹ on the necessity of the transformation of the body, what kind of transformation should take place for life to become a divine life.

It was somewhat like this: somewhere in the centre of this huge building, a room was reserved — in the story, as it seemed, it was reserved for a mother and her daughter. The mother was a very old lady, a self-important matron with much authority and her own views on the whole organisation. The daughter had a sort of power of movement and activity which made it possible for her to be everywhere at once even while remaining in that room which was... well, a little more than a room; it was a sort of apartment, and its main feature was to be right in the centre. But she was in constant argument with her mother. The mother wanted to keep things as they were with the rhythm they had, that is, with precisely that habit of demolishing one thing to build another out of it, and then again demolishing another to rebuild another one — which gave the building an appearance of frightful confusion. And the daughter didn't like that and had another plan. She wanted above all to bring something quite new into this organisation, a sort of super-organisation which would make all this confusion unnecessary. Finally, as it was impossible to come to an understanding, she had left the room to go on a sort of round of inspection... She went her round, saw everything, then she wanted to go back to her own room — for it was her room as well — to take some decisive action. And it was then that something rather peculiar began to happen. She remembered quite well where her

¹ *The Supramental Manifestation*, pp. 33-36.

room was, but each time she set out to go there by one route, either the stairs disappeared or things were so changed that she could no longer recognise her way! And so she went here and there, climbed up and down, searched, went in and out... impossible to find the way back to her room! As all this was taking a physical appearance, which was, as I said, very familiar and very ordinary, as always in these symbolic visions, somewhere there was — how to put it? — the administration of this hotel, and a woman who was a kind of manager, who had all the keys and knew where everybody was staying. So the daughter went to this person and asked, “Can you show me the way to my room?” — “Oh, yes, certainly, it is very easy.” All the people around looked at her as though saying, “How can you say that?” But she got up and, with authority, asked for a key, the key of the room, and said, “I’ll take you there.” Then she took all sorts of routes, but all so complicated, so bizarre! And the daughter followed her very attentively so as not to lose sight of her. And just at the moment when obviously they should have reached the place where this so-called room was, suddenly the manager — we shall call her the manager the manager with her key... disappeared! And this feeling of disappearance was so acute that... everything disappeared at the same time.

If... To help you to understand this riddle, I could tell you that the mother is physical nature as it is and the daughter is the new creation. The manager is the mental consciousness, organiser of the world as Nature has made it until now, that is, the highest sense of organisation manifested in material Nature as it is now. This is the key to the vision. Naturally, when I woke up I knew

immediately what could solve this problem which had seemed absolutely insoluble. The disappearance of the manager and her key was a clear indication that she was quite incapable of leading to its true place what could be called the creative consciousness of the new world.

I knew it but I didn't have the vision of the solution, which means that this is something which is yet to be manifested....

3 July 1957

Amenhotep

About two years ago, I had a vision about X's son. She had brought him to me, he was not quite one year old, and I had just seen him there, in the room where I receive people. He gave me the impression of someone I knew very well, but I didn't know who. And then, in the afternoon of the same day, I had a vision. A vision of ancient Egypt, that is to say, I saw someone there, the great priestess or somebody — I don't know who, for one doesn't tell oneself "I am so and so": the identification is complete, there is no objectifying, so I don't know. I was in a wonderful building, immense! so high! but quite bare, there was nothing, except a place where there were magnificent paintings. So there I recognised the paintings of ancient Egypt. And I was coming out of my apartments and was entering a kind of large hall. There was a sort of gutter running all round the base of the walls, for collecting water. And then I saw the child, who was half naked, playing in it. And I was quite shocked, I said, "What! this is disgusting!" — but the feelings, ideas, all that was translated into French in my consciousness. There was the tutor who came, I had him called. I scolded him. I heard sounds. Well, I don't know what I said, I don't remember the sounds at all now. I heard the sounds I was articulating, I knew what they meant, but the translation was in French, and the sounds I could not remember. I spoke to him, told him, "How can you let the child play in there?" And he answered me — and I woke up with his reply — saying — I did not hear the first words, but in my thought it was — "Amenhotep likes it." I heard Amenhotep, I remembered. Then I knew the child

was Amenhotep. So I know that I spoke: I spoke a language but I don't remember it now. I remembered "Amenhotep" because I know it in my waking consciousness: "Amenhotep." But otherwise, the other sounds did not remain. I have no memory for sounds.

And I know I was his mother; at that moment I knew who I was, for I know Amenhotep is the son of so-and-so — besides, I looked up the history. Otherwise there is no connection: a blank.

I always admire those mediums — usually very simple people — who have the exact memory of the sound, who can tell you, "Look, I said this and this." In that way one would have the phonetic notation. If I could remember the sounds I pronounced, we would have the notation, but I don't.

I remember this conversation; suddenly I said to myself, "It would be so interesting if one could hear that language", and then, out of curiosity, "How did they discover the pronunciation? How?" Besides, all the names we were taught as children, in ancient history, have been changed today. They say they have discovered the sounds, or at least they claim to have discovered them. But I don't know.

It is the same thing for ancient Babylon: I have extremely precise memories, completely objective, but when I speak I don't remember the sounds I utter, there is only the mental translation.

I have no memory for sounds.

23 May 1956

The Origin of All Avatars

Today I have been asked to speak to you about the Avatar....

I could speak to you of a very old tradition, more ancient than the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition, that is, the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions, in which it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces — known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras — the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most inconscient matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love.

In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the work of Awakening.

If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his Light; and he will

continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world — and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.

And it is remarkable that this wonderful Being strangely resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.

The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.

28 May 1958

A New World Is Born

It seems strange that something so new, so special and I might say so unexpected should happen during a film-show.¹ For people who believe that some things are important and other things are not, that there are activities which are helpful to yoga and others which are not, well, this is one more opportunity to show that they are wrong. I have always noticed that it is unexpected things which give you the most interesting experiences.

Yesterday evening, suddenly something happened which I have just described to you as best I could — I don't know if I have succeeded in making myself understood — but it was truly quite new and altogether unexpected. We were shown, comparatively clumsily, a picture of the temple on the banks of the Ganges, and the statue of Kali — for I suppose it was a photograph of that statue, I could not manage to get any precise information about it — and while I was seeing that, which was a completely superficial appearance and, as I said, rather clumsy, I saw the reality it was trying to represent, what was behind, and this put me in touch with all that world of religion and worship, of aspiration, man's whole relationship with the gods, which was — I am already speaking in the past tense — which was the flower of the human spiritual effort towards something more divine than man, something which was the highest and almost the purest expression of his effort

¹ A Bengali film, *Rani Rasmani*, which describes the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Rani Rasmani, a rich, very intelligent and religious Bengali widow, who in 1847 built the temple of Kali at Dakshineswar (Bengal) where Sri Ramakrishna lived and worshipped Kali.

towards what is higher than he. And suddenly I had concretely, materially, the impression that it was another world, a world that had ceased to be real, living, an outdated world which had lost its reality, its truth, which had been transcended, surpassed by something which had taken birth and was only beginning to express itself, but whose life was so intense, so true, so sublime, that all this became false, unreal, worthless.

Then I truly understood — for I understood not with the head, the intelligence but with the body, you understand what I mean — I understood in the cells of the body — that a new world is born and is beginning to grow.

And so, when I saw all this, I remembered something that had happened... I think I remember rightly, in 1926.¹

Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting to me the work of helping and guiding them, that I would remain in contact with him, naturally, and that through me he would do the work. Suddenly, immediately, things took a certain shape: a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contacts with divine beings, and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous. Experiences followed one upon another, and well, things were unfolding

¹ On 24 November 1926, Sri Aurobindo withdrew into seclusion and the Mother assumed charge of the running of the Ashram.

altogether brilliantly and... I must say, in an extremely interesting way.

One day, I went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening — we had come to something really very interesting, and perhaps I showed a little enthusiasm in my account of what had taken place — then Sri Aurobindo looked at me... and said: “Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn all events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed...” and then he smiled and said: “It will be a great success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality.”

With my inner consciousness I understood immediately: a few hours later the creation was gone... and from that moment we started anew on other bases.

Well, I announced to you all that this new world was born. But it has been so engulfed, as it were, in the old world that so far the difference has not been very perceptible to many people. Still, the action of the new forces has continued very regularly, very persistently, very steadily, and to a certain extent, very effectively. And one of the manifestations of this action was my experience — truly so very new — of yesterday evening. And the result of all this I have noted step by step in almost daily experiences. It could be expressed succinctly, in a rather linear way:

First, it is not only a “new conception” of spiritual life and the divine Reality. This conception was expressed by Sri Aurobindo, I have expressed it myself many a time, and it could be formulated somewhat like this: the old spirituality was an escape from life into the divine Reality, leaving the world just where it was, as it was; whereas our new vision, on the contrary, is a divinisation of life, a transformation of the material world into a divine world. This has been said, repeated, more or less understood, indeed it is the basic idea of what we want to do. But this could be a continuation with an improvement, a widening of the old world as it was — and so long as this is a conception up there in the field of thought, in fact it is hardly more than that — but what has happened, the really new thing, is that a new world is *born, born, born*. It is not the old one transforming itself, it is a *new* world which is *born*. And we are right in the midst of this period of transition where the two are entangled — where the other still persists all-powerful and entirely dominating the ordinary consciousness, but where the new one is quietly slipping in, still very modest, unnoticed — unnoticed to the extent that outwardly it doesn’t disturb anything very much, for the time being, and that in the consciousness of most people it is even altogether imperceptible. And yet it is working, growing — until it is strong enough to assert itself visibly...

... But the road to it is a completely new road which has never before been traced out — nobody has gone there, nobody has done that! It is a beginning, a *universal beginning*. So, it is an absolutely unexpected and unpredictable adventure.

There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: “I invite you to the great adventure.”

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails — a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will *never* be again in the same way. If that interests you... well, let us embark. What will happen to you tomorrow — I have no idea.

One must put aside all that has been foreseen, all that has been devised, all that has been constructed, and then... set off walking into the unknown. And — come what may! *Voilà*.

10 July 1957



The Darshan of 24 November 1969